

DEMYSTIFYING  
Patanjali  
THE YOGA SUTRAS (Aphorisms)



THE WISDOM OF  
PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA

*Presented by his direct disciple, SWAMI KRIYANANDA*

# Praise FOR Patañjali

“The Yoga Sutras has generated almost as many translations and commentaries as there are sutras in Patanjali’s masterpiece. Inevitably, the takeaway for readers is different in each instance because the nuances of interpretation lead the student in radically different directions. Many versions were written by the gurus who brought the ancient tradition to the West, but one important voice, Yogananda’s, was missing. We will never have a Yogananda translation, but now we have the next best thing: a direct disciple’s interpretation of the master’s perspective. Because Yogananda’s role in bringing Yoga to the West is unsurpassed, *Demystifying Patanjali* is a welcome and illuminating contribution to the ongoing transmission.” —**Philip Goldberg**, author of *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation, How Indian Spirituality Changed the West*

“Swami Kriyananda has provided an immensely readable translation of and commentary on Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*. This central text outlines all the basics required for a balanced Yoga practice. It effortlessly describes and explains the various states of meditation. Patanjali outlines the foundational ethics of Yoga, including abstention from impure, distracting, and deflating actions. By rising up into the state of spirituality, one can overcome the myriad troubles of life. Swami Kriyananda adds yet another jewel to the treasure trove of *Yoga Sutra* interpretations.” —**Christopher Key Chapple**, Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology and Director of Yoga Studies, Loyola Marymount University

“As an author and teacher on the subject of meditation I have long searched for a clear explanation of Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*. *Demystifying Patanjali* finally fulfills this need. The world of yoga is looking for more depth and a return to its ancient roots. This powerful book provides a clear, grounded roadmap that goes to the very heart of the spiritual search.” —**Nayaswami Jyotish Novak**, author of *How to Meditate*

“Read Swami Kriyananda’s version of the *Yoga Sutras* and you will be convinced why even after two thousand years, this book remains the best practice manual for achieving positive mental health and spiritual fulfillment.” —**Amit Goswami, PhD**, quantum physicist and author of *The Self-Aware Universe* and *Creative Evolution*.

“After reading many translations of the *Yoga Sutras* over the years, I found Swami Kriyananda’s commentaries and writings so lucid and practical in their application to everyday life. It is a blessing to have Patanjali’s teaching accessible to everyone seeking the divine within.” —**Dennis M. Harness, PhD**, psychologist and Vedic astrologer

“The words of a great master, whether written by his own hand or recorded by others, are a vehicle primarily for the transference of his consciousness. By studying his thoughts we receive not only his meaning, but also his vibrations. The vibrations of Patanjali, until now, have been largely obscured by clumsy translations, or often even more obscure ‘interpretations.’

“The power of this volume is not only clear, simple meaning, but also a clarity of vibration. This is a Patanjali we never knew was there: kind, practical, incisive, yes, but also generous and sympathetic to those who seek to embrace the vision of infinity he has attained.” —**Asha Praver**, spiritual teacher, author of *Swami Kriyananda: As We Have Known Him*

“I think Brahmarshi Yoganandaji was a direct incarnation of Patanjali, and that Swami Kriyananda is a pure instrument of his guru. *Patanjali Demystified* should pave the way for right understanding of the universal principles for living a happy, healthy, prosperous life as enshrined in the *Yoga Sutras*. Hearty, respectful congratulations to Swami Kriyanandaji.” —**Ram Karan Sharma**, former President, International Association of Sanskrit Studies, presently Visiting Professor (Sanskrit), University of Pennsylvania

“Never before have the timeless teachings of Patanjali been presented so luminously. Like rays of a glorious sun, *Demystifying Patanjali* gives life and depth to Patanjali’s aphorisms. Swami Kriyananda has done the world a marvelous service writing this great work. I loved reading it.” —**Joseph Bharat Cornell**, author of *AUM: The Melody of Love and Sharing Nature with Children*

“In this book, Kriyananda inspires one to the timeless, soul-liberating essence of yoga. Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* can rightfully be called the science of religion. Patanjali offers universal spiritual tools—not sectarian teachings—that work for anyone, from any path or persuasion, because they are based on one’s inner experience, not outward belief. These are the teachings of a higher age, preserved and passed down until now, when we are once again ready to understand and use them.” —**Joseph Selbie**, author of *The Yugas: Keys to Understanding Our Hidden Past, Emerging Energy Age, and Enlightened Future*

“As a teacher of yoga philosophy, I have struggled for years to understand and convey to students the meaning of Patanjali’s Yoga Aphorisms—the source material on yoga. *Demystifying Patanjali* provides the key that I have long been searching for—unlocking the door to a true understanding of how the science of yoga is a path to enlightenment.” —**Nayaswami Devi**, lecturer and author

“I enjoyed reading *Demystifying Patanjali*, which is a view of the *Yoga Sutras* from the perspective of Paramhansa Yogananda. Its personal anecdotes and other stories add to the narrative.” —

**Subhash Kak**, Regents Professor and Head, Department of Computer Science, Oklahoma State University, author of *The Gods Within: Mind, Consciousness and the Vedic Tradition*

“Swami Kriyananda, recalling the words of his great spiritual master, Paramhansa Yogananda, unlocks the secrets of Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*—a work that has sent generations of translators and commentators scrambling for thesauruses. Now, for the first time, yoga practitioners can read and understand the hidden, central, exalted, original teaching of which their practice is a side-branch. Explained by Yogananda, Patanjali’s obscure aphorisms come to life—and more than that, *they finally make sense*.” —**Richard**

**Dayanand Salva**, author of *Walking with William of Normandy: A Paramhansa Yogananda Pilgrimage Guide*

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*Presented by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

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# Foreword

by *Nayaswami Gyandev McCord*  
author of *SPIRITUAL YOGA*

The yoga community has undergone dramatic changes in the last thirty years. Hatha Yoga has gone from an arcane curiosity to a mainstream regime for wellness; it's now practiced regularly by nearly twenty million Americans, and many other countries are seeing similar interest. Countless new styles have emerged. Yoga is gaining acceptance in the medical community as a valid therapeutic self-care practice—not only the yoga postures, but meditation as well. Most thrilling to me, however, is a relatively recent development: the mushrooming interest in the higher, spiritual dimensions of yoga. Enjoyable and beneficial though Hatha Yoga certainly is, more and more people are eager to experience what lies beyond the physical aspects of yoga.

For these people, the *Yoga Sutras* (aphorisms) of Patanjali has become a popular place to begin—and appropriately so, for it's one of the main scriptures of yoga, it's concise, and it's thought-provoking, even inspiring. Unfortunately, however, Patanjali is so concise that many of his aphorisms are wide open to an entire spectrum of interpretations—and many translators and commentators have marched boldly through that opening, thereby creating a good deal of misinterpretation, unclarity, and confusion.

For example, some authors claim that Patanjali's brief mention of *asana* (posture) means that he advocated the practice of yoga postures. There is no evidence of that; he was simply advocating a suitable sitting position for meditation, which has always been the central practice of yoga. Other examples arise time and again in the myriad confusing translations of certain key aphorisms, such as the second one, arguably the most important of all: "Yoga is the suppression of the transformations of the thinking principle." What can anyone do with that?

All this caused me much frustration in my own quest to fathom the Yoga Sutras. The commentaries that I found were either abstruse or vague, and almost always disjointed. I wanted a straight-to-the-point explanation of what Patanjali was really saying, and how to apply it in my own spiritual quest. And since *yoga* is widely known to mean “union [of the soul with Spirit],” I wanted to know what Patanjali said about Spirit; alas, commentators too often go to great lengths to avoid even mentioning God.

Still I hoped, for in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Paramhansa Yogananda stated that Patanjali was an *avatar*, one who has achieved divine union and reincarnated in order to help others. “That must mean,” I reasoned, “that there’s more to these aphorisms than what I’ve seen. How can I find out?”

In this book, Swami Kriyananda has shown us that there is indeed more—*much* more. His training with his guru, Paramhansa Yogananda, gave him the deep understanding and penetrating, intuitive insight necessary to unlock the secrets of the Yoga Sutras. His extraordinary clarity of presentation gives us a fresh and accessible—yet uncompromisingly deep—perspective on this timeless scripture. Kriyananda reveals Patanjali’s clear vision of the single, eminently practical path that underlies *all* spiritual traditions—that of moving from ego-identification to soul-identification—and how to walk that path using the nonsectarian tools of yoga. Here at last is the thread that ties together these 196 aphorisms.

Kriyananda has written more than 140 books, and in this one, he shows once again that he is an unsurpassed exponent of the yoga science. Although Paramhansa Yogananda never wrote a commentary on the Yoga Sutras, I feel that he has now done so through his direct disciple, Swami Kriyananda. A veil has been lifted, and Patanjali’s teaching is revealed as it truly is: a deep and inspiring scripture—yet also a practical scripture, accessible and applicable to any spiritual seeker.

This book is a blessing. It shows the eternal way to lasting happiness and freedom. It’s not just another intellectual exploration; it’s a handbook for the true practice of yoga.

# Preface

## *The Anathema of Blind Belief*

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are a stirring cry to us to transcend all religious differences. Their basic message is, "Here are methods that can be tested and proved. You can know what God is from personal experience."

Paramhansa Yogananda declared that the future of religion everywhere would be Self-realization: actual experience of the universal Self. Patanjali tells how to attain this state of divine oneness.

In the past, and to a large extent even today, religion has been equated with systems of belief. Everywhere it has been assumed that God cannot be known, and that we must accept some authority's opinions about Him. People have even fought in defense of those opinions. Muslims, zealous to force conversion on others, have gone so far as to slaughter people by the masses—and in the belief that they were pleasing Allah! (Human folly can hardly rise higher than their promise of sensual delights in heaven to any thug who sacrifices his life to bring about such conversions.)

Religion everywhere offers us attainment of the highest that is in us, and then boxes us in with sectarianism, intolerance, and threats of divine punishment to anyone who fails to "toe the line"! Patanjali offers attainments far higher than any sensual heaven. He also fills our minds with forgiveness, genuine, all-embracing love, and understanding.

Patanjali brings to mankind more than a fresh breath of truth: he brings the wind of a new reality, redolent with fresh drafts of hope—hope not only for a better, but for a *perfect* future!

# Introduction

I approach this work after struggling hopelessly through many appallingly bad translations and commentaries on Patanjali. I do not know Sanskrit as such, though I know many Sanskrit words and expressions. It is easy for me, however, to see when people's rendition of it into English is bad. Of all the translations of Patanjali to which I've been exposed, not *one* has been worth the trouble of an in-depth, serious study.

My Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda, personally shared with me some of his most important insights into these sutras. During the three and a half years I lived with him before he left his body, he also went with me at great length into the basic teachings of yoga.

I do not have the enormous advantage I had when I wrote, from memory, my Guru's commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, for I had worked with him personally on editing that book.

I have worked on this book, however, from a deep knowledge of his teachings, and from personal reflections of times when we were alone together at his desert retreat, and he spoke to me of Patanjali's subtle meanings. I therefore know the yoga teachings of Patanjali as I received them at first hand from my Guru. I have steeped myself in those teachings for the past sixty-four years. All the books of commentaries on Patanjali which I have read, or tried to read, I have found hopelessly pedantic. What am I to make, for example, of such phrases as "mental modifications"? or of such expressions as "becomes assimilated with transformations"? Many or most of the sutras are too muddled in translation even to make sense.

I like clarity, and I feel compelled to work as well as possible to achieve it. I was able, moreover, to ask my Guru personally about many of the subjects covered by Patanjali. His explanations have

lingered with me, and have been a priceless help in the present labor.

I have worked with five different, well-known translations, several of which were based on other well-known commentaries.

I decided to do this work because I see a great need in the world today for this book. I have already written and published 143 other books based on the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda. I cannot promise the reader that what follows will be fully accurate, but at least I can promise him that it will be clear. I hope that what I have written here will help to offset the many books of which the most outstanding feature has been their utter absence of clarity.

# Samadhi Pada

## THE FIRST BOOK

1-1 | The subject now being offered is yoga.

There are two important keys to understanding this first aphorism. One is that these teachings offer no mere debate on the subject. Patanjali is giving us his own realized wisdom.

The second key lies in that insignificant-seeming word, “now.” Now suggests that there has been another dissertation, prior to this, on a subject fundamental to the study of yoga. That subject is the first of the three basic philosophies of ancient India. But even that word, *philosophies*, is inadequate here, suggesting as it does the mere love of wisdom: *philos* (love), and *sophia* (wisdom). But what is taught in every one of those so-called “philosophies” of India, rather, is wisdom itself. If we call them, “philosophies,” it is simply because the English language offers no adequate substitute for the word. Even the word, *system*, which has often been applied to these yoga aphorisms (or *sutras*), is misleading. For Patanjali offered no particular *system* for achieving anything. Rather, he was saying, “These are the stages through which every truth seeker must travel, regardless of his religion, if he would achieve union with the Infinite.”

Of the ancient “philosophical systems” in India, then, these three were basic: *Shankhya*, *Yoga*, and *Vedanta*. The purpose of *Shankhya*, the first of them, was to persuade people of the uselessness of seeking fulfillment through the physical senses, since our physical bodies are not our true Self.

I won't go into that system carefully here, since the subject of this book is yoga. Still, it is important for students of yoga to have a right understanding of the entire subject. All the three philosophies are, in fact, aspects of a single truth. Shankhya offers the *whys* of the spiritual search; yoga, the *hows*; and Vedanta, the *what*. In other words, *why* is it important to renounce attachment to the world?; *how* can we direct all our energy toward the heights?; and *what* to expect, once our energy and consciousness have become one-pointedly directed upward?

Why should we—why should everyone—embrace the spiritual search? This is, essentially, the subject of Shankhya. The answer is partly that we, as earthly beings, are divided in two. We are drawn upward, toward soul happiness, but at the same time downward, toward our past worldly habits.

There is also a universal, twofold impulse that guides us all: We all want to escape pain; and we all want also to find happiness. These basic needs manifest themselves on different levels of refinement—octaves, we might call them. At the highest octave, the desire to escape pain is seen as the true devotee's intense desire to shake off the delusion of separateness from God, and to unite the soul with Him.

On a lower octave, those twin desires are experienced as a longing for worldly fulfillment, and a wish to avoid the disappointment that accompanies such fulfillment. What do I mean by worldly fulfillment? I mean three things, basically: ambition for money; the desire to escape worldly pain through drugs or alcohol; and the drive for sexual satisfaction. These are the three main delusions under which humanity labors as if under a yoke. True fulfillment can never be found in any of them. Subsidiary to those basic delusions, but disappointing nevertheless, are the desire for power; for fame; for popularity; for emotional excitement and emotional fulfillment; and for all kinds of ego-satisfaction.

There is a philosophical explanation for those disappointments. Underlying the restlessness at the surface of the ocean are its calm depths. Underlying our rippling thoughts, similarly, is the underlying vastness of God's consciousness. Waves, regardless how high they rise, cannot affect the over-all ocean level, for each wave is offset by an equally deep trough. Similarly, our emotions have no effect on our deeper consciousness, for every emotional high is balanced by a comparable emotional low.



Creation is ruled by the law of duality. For every up there is a down; for every plus there is a minus. Every pleasure is balanced by an equal displeasure; every joy, by an equal sorrow. The greater the pleasure, the more intense, also, is the displeasure. The greater the happiness, the greater, also, is its comparable unhappiness.

Test these truths in your own life. Isn't it true that all your pains and pleasures, your sorrows and joys, are being constantly evened out sooner or later by their opposites? The pleasure of a "night on the town" is erased by the discomfort of a hangover. Less obvious "binges"—an evening of good, clean fun, for example; or the fulfillment of a long-awaited meeting; or the thrill of a long-desired kiss; or the satisfaction of promotion at work; or the long-delayed ego-fulfillment of a significant award—all these are inevitably balanced by their opposites. The one follows the other as the night the day.

Only a little reflection should suffice to convince you of this truth. Unfortunately, the mind is restless, and lights only briefly, like a fly, upon any given object of contemplation. If you would gain the benefits of contemplation (yoga), and of spiritual realization (Vedanta), the first necessity is stillness of mind. And that stillness is the fruit of yoga practice. Without yoga, there can be no true understanding of Shankhya. Moreover, without some inkling of Vedantic realities there can come no true understanding of either Shankhya or yoga. It may seem like a hopeless puzzle. To achieve perfection in any one of the three philosophies, perfection is needed in all of them! The three philosophies are interconnected.

Without some awareness, however slight, of the need for yoga, there will be no incentive to practice it. And awareness of this need is provided by Shankhya. Indeed, most people stumble through life heedlessly, not knowing why they keep on suffering; not knowing why fulfillments are never permanent; and never realizing why their happiness flickers away even as they gaze at it. Indeed, happiness flickers before their eyes like a candle flame, burning them briefly even as they extinguish it. The poet Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote:

*My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—  
It gives a lovely light!*

Light? Yes. But lovely? Perhaps for a moments or two—but then? Accompanying that light, moreover, is always the menace of approaching darkness. And beside every pleasure, beating its wings to get in, hovers the moth of sadness.

Yes, it all seems so simple, so obvious! And yet, people wander for countless incarnations before they become willing even to consider the perfectly simple and completely obvious truth of their existence!

How many incarnations do they wander? Let me not frighten you by answering that question! Indeed, how long each person clings to his delusions is nobody's choice but his own.

But if you really want to understand Patanjali's yoga aphorisms, you must be ready to ponder at least a little the underlying truths of the Shankhya philosophy. For even the oft-quoted aphorism of Shankhya "*Ishwar ashiddha*, (God is not proved)," is an invitation to go beyond the intellect, and realize truth intuitionally, on a superconscious level.

## 1-2 | Yoga is the neutralization of the vortices of feeling.

I have long puzzled over whether to call this neutralization an achievement or an attainment. For although the perfect stillness of enlightenment is, of course, an achievement, it requires going *beyond* all effort. In fact, that state of consciousness comes only by removing every obstacle to its attainment. I have therefore decided to call it an attainment.

Earlier, I used the example of the ocean waves. Their constant rising and falling illustrates very well the fluctuations of duality. That up and down movement does not, however, illustrate clearly

the ego's grip on duality. *Vritti* means eddy, vortex, or whirlpool, and not (as it is sometimes translated in this aphorism) wave. Our desires and attachments do not make our thoughts fluctuate so much, like waves, as swirl in eddies around the thoughts, "I want; I like; I need; I reject." Rather, we grip them to us as a river's currents draw things to a center in little eddies. Similarly, we revolve our desires around our egos, as in a vortex.

Wherever in the body our ego itself is centered, the attachment to, or desire for any object is centered in the thought of the object itself. These *vrittis*—eddies, or vortices—are located up and down the spine according to the level of consciousness we associate with them. Gross desires have their center in or near one of the lower chakras in the spine. Spiritually uplifting impulses are centered in the higher chakras.

The war of Kurukshetra, allegorized in the Bhagavad Gita, is a struggle between the upward- and the downward-impelling tendencies in our own nature. As long as we are pulled in both directions, we are inwardly divided and can never know peace. If we would find God, we must direct all our tendencies in one direction. Sigmund Freud counseled people to go with the lower tendencies: to give in to the sex instinct, especially. He said that we would never know peace, otherwise. What he did not realize was that in our *true* nature we are manifestations of God. We will never find peace inwardly, if we deny that higher nature.

The only possible way we'll ever find to inner peace will be to encourage our higher "warriors" in this otherwise never-ending struggle. It is a struggle requiring incarnations, but true freedom is not won lightly. Many times, giving up the attempt, people throw in the towel and cry, "I'll relax! I'll find peace by giving in to my desires!" And they may actually find it, temporarily. But it is a shallow peace. And in the end, their own nature drives them to pick up their swords once again and return to the fight. We will find lasting peace only when we have calmed all our inner *vrittis*. When perfect calmness comes to us, then alone will we know peace. This is the state known as *samadhi*.

It must be mentioned here that there are two stages of *samadhi*: *sabikalpa*, and *nirbikalpa*. The first one is that state in which the ego (subtlest of enemies!) says, "It is I who have attained that state!" There remains in that thought some danger of arrogance. Emerging from that lower *samadhi*, one may exclaim, "I am past all obstacles;

I have reached perfection!” As long as that thought, “I” (John Roberts) or “I” (Shirley Robbins), remains, one is not yet free. Only when the soul can say, “There is no John or Shirley to return to; everything is God!” can one say with sincere truthfulness, “I am truly free!” For the “I,” then, will have become identified with the Absolute Spirit. This is the final state of enlightenment, known as *nirbikalpa samadhi*.

Even from this state, one must still dismiss the memory of past incarnations: John or Shirley the American homeowner, the banker, the giver to charities—what to speak of John the pirate, Shirley the shoplifter, and the countless lifetimes we have all lived worldly lives in both male and female bodies—and to see all these as only God acting those parts through our physical vehicles. Only when we have released all those memories into God can we pass beyond the state of *jivan mukta* (freed while living), and pass on to the state of complete liberation, *moksha*. Needless to say, this final state is reached by very few people living this earthly existence.

An *avatar* is one who has attained *moksha*, but then comes back to earth as a pure incarnation of God. Among such great souls, possessed of the divine power to liberate as many as come to them with faith and devotion, may be counted humanity’s noteworthy saviors: Jesus Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Ramakrishna, and Paramhansa Yogananda, and many others.

What did Patanjali mean in this aphorism by the word, *chitta*? This word has been variously translated in editions of the Yoga Sutras as “mind-stuff” and “lower aspects of mind” (the subconscious?). What the translators have meant by “mind-stuff” is perplexing. To me, it means nothing! And by “lower aspects of mind” I suppose they’ve meant the subconscious, but this definition seems inadequate, because the mind alone is a vague concept, and Patanjali always took pains to be precise.

As Yogananda pointed out, the scriptures list four aspects of human consciousness: *mon*, *buddhi*, *ahankara*, and *chitta*: mind, intellect, ego, and feeling.

Many years ago, when Yogananda was a young man, he asked the Maharaja of Kasimbazar to donate property for the foundation of a school for boys, where he wanted to provide an all-round education, centered in spiritual truth. The maharaja, wanting to ascertain whether this young man had the necessary credentials, summoned a group of pundits (men learned in the scriptures) to

grill Yogananda on the extent of his spiritual knowledge.

Yogananda described the scene to us many years later:

“I could see them poised for a spiritual bullfight! Well, my own knowledge is not based on intellectual knowledge. It is based on inner realization—on true wisdom. I therefore said to them at the outset, ‘Let us speak not from intellectual knowledge, but only from truths that we ourselves have realized.

“‘We all know,’ I continued, ‘that the scriptures speak of four aspects of human awareness: *mon* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *ahankara* (ego), and *chitta* (feeling). We have read also that each of these aspects has its respective center in the body, but no scripture tells us where in the body those centers are located. Can you tell me, from your own inner perception, where they are?’

“Well, they were completely at a loss. Having no scripture to fall back on, they could only gape.

“I then told them, ‘*Mon* (mind) is centered in the top of the head. *Buddhi* (intellect) is centered between the eyebrows. *Ahankara* (ego) is centered in the medulla oblongata. And *chitta* (feeling) is centered in the heart.’

“I proceeded to justify my explanation. ‘It is,’ I said, ‘like a horse reflected in a mirror. Mind is that mirror, which, in itself, is blind. That is why Dhritarashtra, in the Mahabharata, is also represented as blind. He represents the blind mind. Intellect steps in then and says, “That’s a horse.” The intellect does not, in itself, bind us to delusion. Intellect, in the Mahabharata, is symbolized as Sanjaya, who relates to Dhritarashtra the events taking place on the battlefield. Ego then steps in and declares, “That’s my horse!” Ego, in the Mahabharata, is symbolized by Bhishma. Some delusion has stepped into the picture now, but even so, the thought, “I” and “mine” can also be impersonal.’”

Chitta is our faculty of feeling. In its outward aspect, it is Karna (attachment). But in its upward aspect it is, as told of Karna in the story itself, brother to the Pandavas, or the upward-drawing tendencies in man. Self-control, devotion, and calmness especially are those qualities which draw us up toward union with God. Both attachment and devotion are centered in the heart. But let us get back to the location in the body where each of the aspects of consciousness is centered.

Mind is centered at the top of the head. There is less physical corroboration for this statement; we have to take it somewhat on

faith. The intellect, however, demonstrably has its center between the eyebrows. When we reason or think deeply, we automatically knit our eyebrows.

Again, when we refer our thoughts, feelings, and actions back to our egos, thinking, “*I did that! I’m the one who is hurt, or flattered, or frustrated,*” we automatically draw our heads back. Proud people are often described as looking down their noses at others. Rock singers tend even to toss their heads from side to side, as if shouting to all, “Look at me!”

And when people are strongly affected emotionally, it is of their hearts they are specially aware. When a woman, for example (women are usually more emotional than men), feels suddenly fearful, worried, or excited, she will often clutch her breast just over the heart.

Thus, the physical centers for each aspect of consciousness are located at the top of the head (for *mon*); between the eyebrows (for *buddi*, or intellect); at the lower part of the brain in the medulla oblongata, (for *ahankara*, or ego); and in the region of the heart (for *chitta*, the feeling quality).

When Yogananda gave this explanation, the pundits admitted themselves vanquished.

The point here, however, is that *chitta* signifies *feeling*. When, in seeing that horse, your feelings declare, “How *happy* I am to see *my* horse!”, that is when delusion grips you. The main—indeed, the only important thing on the spiritual path is to calm the emotions. Calm feeling is love, which unites the soul with God. Restless or agitated feelings, on the other hand—our emotions—disrupt our vision and prevent us from achieving full acceptance that in our true reality we are manifestations of the eternal stillness of God.

Yoga, then, means to calm these vortices of feeling. Feeling it is which forms the whirlpools of desire and attachment into which we draw those desires and attachments to ourselves with the thought, “I want this. I define myself by that. I *am* that!” Herein lies the value of the Kriya Yoga taught by Lahiri Mahasaya of Benares. Kriya Yoga dissolves those *vrittis*, and directs their energy upward toward the spiritual eye in the forehead.

Yoga is the neutralization of every one of those little vortices.

My Guru once said to me, “Every desire must be neutralized.” “Every single desire?” I asked him. “Even little desires, such as for an ice cream cone?”

“Oh, yes!” he replied emphatically.

But on another occasion I asked him to help me overcome attachment to good food. “Don’t bother about those little things,” he replied reassuringly. “When ecstasy comes, everything goes.”

The important thing, in other words, is not so much to concentrate, in a negative way, on all the desires and attachments we have to overcome. The major ones, yes, but the main thing is to focus on giving all our heart’s devotion to the Lord. As a strong river current draws everything along with it, so strong devotion will sweep every little desire upward, toward the brain.

We see then that the definition of yoga is the conquest of every desire and every attachment, by releasing their energy that it may flow upward unidirectionally toward God.

The teaching of the Bhagavad Gita (an excerpt from the Mahabharata) is that, in the battle between our higher and our lower natures, the negative emotions are not destroyed: they are only transformed into positive feelings—into love, enthusiasm for what is true, and a desire to share kindly with all.

To conclude, God is *Satchidananda* (ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new bliss); divine love is bliss in motion; and chitta is bliss “watered down” to the level of human feeling. The “chitta vritti” are the countless little eddies formed by people’s expectations of happiness in outwardness. Their desires and attachments are endless. As Yogananda put it, “Desires, forever gratified, never satisfied.”

### 1-3 | Then, (spiritually free), the sage abides (tranquilly) in his inner Self.

Modern living leads us to confuse fulfillment with excitement. From excitement, however, ensues tension. And tension causes all happiness to vanish. The thrill of the imaginary happiness that people equate with excitement shatters their nerves, and fills them with suppressed fears that emerge with the exhaustion that follows after their emotional jumping up and down. “Kiss me as though this were the last time ever,” goes a popular song in Mexico. And then the desperate affirmation, also from a Mexican song: “Just this once; never again.” (“Besame mucho, como si fuera esta noche la ultima vez.” And, “Una vez, nada mas.”)

Oh, yeah?

People grasp at happiness, then wonder why it slips from their grasp the very moment they clutch at it.

Calmness is the only possible foundation for any true, lasting fulfillment and happiness. Calmness is possible only when the ego stops shouting for attention. The most important thing on the spiritual path is to silence the demands of ego. Therefore, in my own life there are two things I simply refuse to do: to pray for myself; and to defend myself.

Many years ago, I was suddenly seized with a severe kidney stone attack. It was a Sunday morning, and at eleven o'clock I was scheduled to conduct the weekly service at our retreat. The attack hit me at nine o'clock. I shook all over like a leaf in a gale. Friends urged me to go with them to the nearest hospital. That hospital, however, was more than a half hour away by car, over winding roads. The thought of being moved at all threatened me with more pain than I felt I could bear. I refused. My friends thought, of course, that at least I would pray, but, though I said nothing, inwardly I refused to do that. So I knelt over my bed, shaking violently for nearly two hours. At last I glanced at my watch. Ten forty-five: only fifteen minutes and the service was to begin! Would it begin without me?

At this point I prayed, "Divine Mother, I will not pray for myself, but if You want me to give that service, You're going to have to do something about it."

Instantly, in the time it would take you to wave your hand quickly from left to right, the pain vanished, and was replaced by an intense inner joy—a joy so great, in fact, that I could hardly lecture that morning at all anyway, so filled with bliss was my heart. I did give the sermon, and everyone present felt uplifted in bliss, but I don't think it was because of anything I said!

Experience over many years has convinced me that, if we really repose our trust in God, and ask nothing for ourselves, He (or She; God is both, and also neither!) will supply all our needs. Long experience has convinced me, also, that Divine Mother (as I think of God) will protect me.

A calm mind, moreover, usually calms opposition. When it fails to do so, it disarms it.

Many years ago, when I was new in America, thirteen years old and weighing only 107 lbs., a schoolmate of mine, Tommy Maters,



two years older than I and weighing 230 lbs., decided he didn't like the English accent I had in those days. He kept threatening me. I remained calm. At lunch one day he sat next to me and kept criticizing my table manners. ("Don't you know you should spoon your soup out of the *far* side of the bowl? Peasant!") I calmly ignored him.

"Boy am I going to get *you*!" he exclaimed fiercely at last. I knew he meant it. On returning to my room, and since there were no locks on our doors, I pushed the chest of drawers across the opening as an obstruction. But of course it was child's play for Tommy to push the door open. Charging into my room, he threw me onto the bed and began to pummel me ruthlessly. There was nothing I could do about it but lie there and protect my face as well as I could with my hands.

"I'm going to throw you out the window," he kept whispering, making sure to keep his voice low so as not to attract attention on the corridor. My room was three storeys above the ground. I said nothing. Finally, exhausted, he left me—somewhat the worse for wear than he'd found me, but still alive.

"Why didn't you cry for help?" a classmate of mine asked me afterward.

"Because I wasn't afraid," I answered.

"Whatever happens," I'd told myself during the pummeling, "I accept."

Interestingly, from then on Tommy left me alone.

Calm, passive resistance—an attitude we'll discuss at more length later on—wins out over violent emotions.

Thus, the calmness that Patanjali describes in this aphorism is not only to be attained through spiritual endeavor: The practice of calmness under adversity also hastens that attainment.

Every spiritual fruit comes from right attitude. If you want to know peace, practice being peaceful now, especially under adverse circumstances. If you want to know joy, be joyful now, especially when matters look bleak! And if you want to know divine love, love everybody, even your self-proclaimed enemies. (No, I can't say I ever loved Tommy, but at least I never felt anything against him.)

An interesting aspect of the spiritual path, even if unsettling for the neophyte, is the assurance that, whatever your faults and shortcomings, God will see to it that your nose gets rubbed in them—if, of course, you sincerely want to free yourself from those

shortcomings.

This aphorism of Patanjali, therefore, should be taken not only as a promise of reward, but as counsel for the right attitude to hold under every circumstance.

### 1-4 | Otherwise (if one hasn't found inner peace) the vrittis cause the indwelling Self to assume many (outward) forms.

Until one has attained inner calmness, his vrittis (inclinations, or desires and attachments) not only assume many outward forms, but also draw him into depths of innumerable delusions. Our countless self-definitions are not who we truly are. We may tell ourselves, "I am a man (or a woman); I am rich; I am American; I am young (or old); I like (or don't like) chocolate." None of this is true. We are the immortal, ever-changeless Atman, the Supreme Self. Our ego-nature can take us to the spiritual heights, or to unimaginable depths of depravity. We can become saints, or fall so low as to be reincarnated, finally, as germs. It is up to us. We are not our vrittis. They only determine our temporary lot in life. We are, and always will be, the immortal Atman, God. This is true, because Creation itself is only His manifestation.

### 1-5 | There are five classifications of vrittis: painful and painless.

The vrittis, as I have stated already, are one's self-developed inclinations, his desires and attachments. People may define themselves in any way they like, but some of their self-definitions will cause them pain, whereas others will give them pleasure. Please note that no self-definition can bring anyone happiness, for all self-definitions are self-limiting. And the limitations they place upon us determine the degree of our very happiness, or unhappiness. Being kind to others, for example, does not in itself

produce happiness, for true happiness is a quality of the soul. Sharing with others can only help to remove one of the basic causes of *unhappiness*, by removing a layer of egoism from the giver's consciousness.

Thus, we must try to overcome all self-definitions. We must tell ourselves, "I am neither a man nor a woman. I am neither rich nor poor. I am a member of no social class. I am a citizen of no country. No tradition and no heritage is mine. I am neither short nor tall. I am a free soul, defined as such by my own freedom in God." As Swami Shankara boldly declared: "No birth, no death, no caste have I. Father, mother have I none. I am He! I am He! Blissful Spirit, I am He! / Mind, nor intellect, nor chitta have I; sky, nor earth, nor metals (body) am I. I am He! I am He! Blissful Spirit, I am He!"

Our vrittis do not define us as we are: they only define us as we *think* we are. And according to our vrittis, we may tread the downward path to further suffering, or the upward, to eventual bliss in Him.

1-6 | (The vrittis are) right and wrong conceptions of what is, imagination, sleep, and memory. All vrittis, in stirring the waters of feeling, distort the reality that is soul-Bliss.

A perfect illustration of the relation between soul and Spirit is the gas burner in a kitchen: one source of gas flows separately through each hole of the burner. To show the individuality of each individualized being, one might even throw a different chemical on each jet, making one appear green, another orange, another yellow, and so forth. Each jet can be given a different scent. Each can, according to the size of its hole, appear fat or thin.

Each one of us, in other words, is different in appearance. But all of us manifest equally the same underlying reality: Spirit.

Our vrittis are delusory. Even to have a right conception of truth may help lead us eventually to truth, but the conception itself is not that truth, any more than the mere conception that water is wet will even moisten our clothes.

Meditation is the best way to banish delusion. In perfect

calmness, one sees the illusory nature of each delusion as it is presented to his perception. A salesman may approach one with the offer of a “killing” on the market; if one has calm wisdom, he will see that, “killing” or no, riches will bring him no satisfaction. A beautiful woman may hold out to him the temptation of embracing her body; if he has calm wisdom, however, he will see at once that no physical touch can ever convey true satisfaction to his immaterial soul. A reeling drunk may come to you and plead, “Look, you have many problems in your life, haven’t you? Come and drink with me; let’s forget our difficulties!”; if you possess calm wisdom, you’ll see that, drunk or not, those problems will remain with you—even if for a few fleeting hours you forget them. By drunkenness, moreover, you’ll only reduce your capacity for coping with them effectively when, once more, they surface in your life.

All vrittis are illusory. It’s only that certain vrittis take the mind upward, out of delusion, whereas others draw it downward into deeper ignorance.

Right conceptions—for instance, that it is good to frequent spiritual places—will take you upward, to the point where you’ll be able effortlessly to rise out of delusion altogether. Wrong conceptions, on the other hand—for example, the thought that you will find happiness in hobnobbing with old drinking buddies—will take your mind downward, clouding it with delusive fancies of laughing good times, dirty jokes, and fantasies of an ever-illusive wealth.

Imagination can be either helpful or harmful, depending on whether we use it to see possibilities, where a practical view of reality gives us no answer; or whether we seek rest in pleasant but unrealistic dreams of a reality that might have been. People without imagination seldom come up with innovative solutions to their practical problems. But people with imagination, but no will power or energy, may end up in lunatic asylums.

Sleep is both a necessary energy-restorer and a temptation to sluggishness—to what is known as *tamoguna*, a slothful tendency of the mind that merely hopes one’s difficulties will dissolve of themselves, in time.

And memory can make us dream in vain of a vanished past. On the other hand, a clear memory can give us clues to nagging present problems that seem to defy solution. In the highest spiritual sense, as we shall see later, memory is also that which brings to mind the

truth that we are sons of God—a truth we have forgotten for eons, but one which remains in our souls, reminding us always that we are forever divine.

How you direct your vrittis, or inclinations, then, depends entirely on you. But one factor that can influence the way you use them is the company you keep. Environment—which includes your companions—is stronger than will power.

Even our wrong inclinations can be changed to right ones. For instance, many years ago, when I was new on the path, I suddenly fell into a negative mood. Reasoning didn't help me to get out of it. But I didn't like that mood. Therefore I sat in meditation, and placed my mind forcibly at the point between the eyebrows. Five minutes was all it took. Once I had raised my consciousness, I saw the whole world with new eyes.

Our thoughts are not our own. As Paramhansa Yogananda wrote in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, “Man's thoughts are universally and not individually rooted.” A person may think, “Oh, I'm not all that much influenced by others' thoughts,” but he doesn't realize that his *every* thought is influenced by countless factors: by his level of consciousness; by others' expectations of him; by the general level of consciousness in the country and the times in which he lives; by the food he eats, and by the places where, and the people among whom he eats; by the sun's, moon's, and planetary positions in his horoscope; by his sex; by his past deeds and their influence, in turn, on his personality; even by the present position of the earth in our galaxy. When we consider our past deeds, moreover, we must take into consideration not only our deeds in this life, but also the fact that we have lived countless incarnations—not only here on Earth, but on many planets. The specific memory of those lives is lost to us, but their influence on our present outlook and tendencies remains very great.

In India, I encountered a manuscript purported to have been written thousands of years ago, when our earth was passing through what is known as Treta Yuga, an enlightened age when mankind overcomes the delusion of time. That manuscript foretold my life, and in such detail as to say, “He will have brothers, but no sister is possible though one will die in his mother's womb.” [When I returned to America, I asked my mother if she had ever had a miscarriage. “Yes,” she replied, “I had one.” I have had two brothers.] The manuscript mentioned other facts of my life, and

correctly foretold tests to come, and rewards that would come after I'd passed those tests. It added, "There is, however, a danger of sudden, unexpected death." Interestingly, that dire prediction might have materialized three times in my life.

The first was in the desert at Twentynine Palms, in California. I had gone out for a walk, and suddenly a flock of crows flew closely around my head. I thought at the time, "This seems an evil omen."

I'd been sleeping out of doors on a little terrace. Two days later, I made up my bed before returning home. Between the sheets I found a squashed black widow spider. I must have rolled over in my sleep, and inadvertently killed it.

The second occasion, I was setting up a microphone for an event in India. As I grasped the boom, a sudden electric short circuit lifted me off my feet. In that instant the fuse blew. Had it not done so, my hands would have become frozen to the microphone boom and I'd have been killed. The event was delayed some thirty minutes while a new fuse was located, but at least my life was spared.

(Interestingly, perhaps, the person for whom I was preparing that microphone later tried twice to destroy me, although not actually to kill me! Was this the first hint of the karmic troubles between us?)

The third event occurred also in India. I had bought a Lambretta motor scooter, and removed it from its crate when it arrived at the home I was staying in, in New Delhi. I sat on the seat, and turned the key without realizing that the motor was in gear. I had never driven a Lambretta before, and didn't even know where the brakes were. Suddenly the machine took off at high speed. I was inside a brick-walled courtyard, and had less than two seconds to figure out how to get the motor scooter out of gear and to brake it. Luckily, I managed both, stopping barely six inches from certain death.

Let's face it, you, I, and all of us are hodgepodes! (Is that word permissible?) Our only sure help is to think of God, to pray for His grace, and to seek His presence in meditation. As Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, "Get away from My ocean of suffering and misery!"

1-7 | Right understanding comes from direct perception,  
inference, and valid authority.

An American friend of Ananda's has spent years in prison, convicted of murder, even though he insists he was framed; the man he is accused of having murdered has been seen in Europe; and from all we can tell the judge was highly prejudiced against him. My own faith in the justice of the law courts vanished on my own exposure to it years ago. It seems useless to trust in the justice of man. All we can trust as infallible is the law of karma.

In our own minds, however, it is important for us to see things truly. And this passage expresses the importance of right understanding, and of what we have to do to achieve it. Direct perception is one tool on which we can rely—but only partially. Our eyes may tell us that that cloud on a distant hill is mist, but the facts of the case may be that what is really there is smoke from a fire.

Inference from false perception is useless.

The last of these three, valid authority, is the most important of all. When it comes to a simple, earthly matter, valid authority may come to us by a phone call or from a radio report. When it comes to subtle matters, however, especially to spiritual ones such as the question, Does God exist?, true perception is rare; without true intuition, perception is not always reliable.

I remember once visiting the inn at Big Sur, California. The proprietor was a big bear of a man. For some reason we got to speaking about God. The proprietor seemed oddly insistent on his own point of view. I therefore said, "I think that, in all my life, I may have met six persons who I thought actually knew God."

He put out a hairy paw and, in a rough voice, declared, "Shake! Ya just met the seventh!"

Needless to say, his mere declaration did not convince me!

How do we know God exists? Most of us cannot speak from personal perception. Must our knowledge come from inference, then?

Many years ago, when I was only thirteen, I determined to find truth. I tried to find it through the sciences, through a scientific outlook, through political systems, through the arts. Whatever path I followed, I found it to be a dead end. At last, in desperation—at the age of twenty-one—I decided, Without God, there can be no truth. I had left Him out of my reckoning because the God I had heard about in church could not be real. But one evening I took a long walk out into the gathering night and asked myself, "If there's

a God, what must He be?" I discarded all the usual images of judge, etc. as too human to be believable.

And then I asked, "What is it that is driving me to ask this question?"

The answer came, "Because I am conscious."

Suddenly, then, I understood: God *must* be Consciousness!

If such is the case, then (I went on), my duty as a human being is to open myself fully to *His* consciousness!

I had my answer! From then on, I decided to dedicate myself to the search for God. But I needed help. Inference had proved to me that there had to be a God. I still lacked the final tool for right understanding: I needed some valid authority. To this essential key God Himself led me. It lay in the Indian scriptures, and in an Indian guru. I didn't know this much at the time, however. I knew almost nothing about the Indian scriptures. And they'd have called me to a way of life against which my entire upbringing would have militated fiercely. At just this time, my father was sent by his company to a distant land: from New York to Egypt, to search for oil. That this was entirely God's grace was made clear to me when his company later sent him elsewhere, though another company came in subsequently and found oil exactly where my father had declared it would be found. He was a major influence in my life, but God released me from that influence. Months later, the very day I put my mother on the ship to go join him, I went uptown New York and, in a bookshop, discovered *Autobiography of a Yogi*, by Paramhansa Yogananda. Free to make this drastic change in my life, I took the next bus to Los Angeles, California, met Yogananda, and was accepted by him as a disciple. I have been his disciple now for sixty-four years. He has been my "valid authority."

Some translators have translated "valid authority" as "scriptural authority," accepting that "right understanding" meant, as regarding spiritual matters. Scriptural authority, however, depends on unreliable factors such as interpretation, (in most cases) the translator's own understanding, and the power of personal experience in the one who expounds that authority. The only really valid authority in spiritual matters is a person who has himself realized God—in other words, a true, or *sat*, guru.

And yet, the disciples of a true guru will themselves vary in their discernment. It is important, therefore, also, to rely on one's own *understanding* of what the guru has taught. Even close disciples



are capable of mistaking what their guru meant on some of the most fundamental points. For oneself, therefore, I would caution: Never be too sure of anything! Humility is the safest path to God. But the most important guidance can only come from clear intuitive perception. And inner attunement with the guru can give such perception.

## 1-8 | Wrong understanding is mistaking the true nature of that which is being considered.

In meditation, one may observe angels, saints, and heavenly lights. I have known people to guide their lives by such visions. And I have known some to make great mistakes in their lives in consequence of false visions. How to tell true from false visions? true from false inner voices? How to tell true spiritual experiences from the mere vagaries of an active imagination?

First, there must be deep calmness as one considers. Without calmness, there can be no true intuition. Wrong understanding is most often due to restlessness.

Modern society, restless as it is, understands almost everything wrongly. I myself never watch television, and if I had a radio I wouldn't turn it on. And this is what people expose themselves to daily at home, several hours a day, almost everywhere on earth! How can they understand *anything* aright?

I was with my Guru once, in the presence of a few of his monk disciples. He turned to Oliver Rogers and said, "Rogers, you will have clear sailing."

A few of the other monks thought instantly, "What about me? Will I, too, have clear sailing?"

Responding to that thought, the Guru said, "And you will all have clear sailing—if you keep in tune."

Later, when the Guru had left our presence, several of them exulted, "Did you hear that? He said we'd all have clear sailing!"

Well, I didn't want to dampen their enthusiasm by pointing out the obvious: Master had added that little word, "if." "If" was all the response a Spartan general gave in answer to the threats of a Persian general boasting of what he would do to the Greeks, once

he'd conquered them. The Persians lost.

Wrong understanding is one of the main obstacles in life, everywhere, and especially on the spiritual path. A man starts out in life thinking, "I'll become wealthy! live in a large mansion! become powerful, famous, and envied everywhere!" Yes—if! Those who don't do the hard work to achieve all those things may end up lowly clerks in a cobweb-covered office.

A man starts out on the spiritual path thinking, "I know what I need." He meets a true guru, but keeps telling himself, "I know what's best for me." Many such disciples return to the world, disillusioned with the guru—so they think, but years later their eyes show a much deeper disillusionment with the world.

One of the first needs on the spiritual path is right understanding. Why are you on this path? Why did you leave a worldly life? Why do you want to find God? Do you perhaps really want only recognition? admiration? respect? a high position? Many such disciples have I seen scoffing at the treatment they received.

The first needs of a disciple are obedience, humility, devotion to the guru as a channel of God, and complete openness to whatever he gives them.

Wrong understanding is rooted in ego. We cannot perceive anything correctly so long as our very ability to perceive is overwhelmed with thoughts of, "I! I! I!"

The mind is inclined to self-deception, born of wishful thinking and ego-protectiveness. Hence the absolute need for a guru, if one is a sincere seeker. And even then, one must approach the guru with a right attitude.

## 1-9 | Understanding that is based on untruth is imaginary.

There was a pundit in the life of Sri Ramakrishna who justified a wrong action by saying, "You mean that, even though everything is a dream, this deed alone is *not* a dream?!"

Self-justification is never safe, for it attempts to exonerate what is, anyway, a lie: the ego! It is safest for the sincere seeker to assume himself in some way in the wrong, and not to try to defend

himself against even the bitterest accusations. Seek the truth always, under all circumstances, and do your best always to rid your mind of any temptation to justify yourself.

## 1-10 | Sleep is attachment to nothingness.

My Guru used to say, “Sleep is counterfeit samadhi.” A little sleep is a human necessity, but too much sleep is a drug. Seek the rest your soul needs in deep meditation.

I find myself wondering as I read this passage, however: Is sleep only attachment to nothingness? Some of my best music has come to me during sleep. Some of my best answers to problems have come to me at such times. And also, some of my best spiritual guidance.

Only this morning, for example as I write this, while I was still asleep, I was trying to think of ways to keep people coming faithfully every week to our satsangs in Italy. Toward the end of this dream, I came upon a plan that, I believe, would be so useful as to become, perhaps, a means of helping to bring about a higher state of consciousness for all humanity.

The plan was for everyone, of every religion, to set aside fifteen minutes to calm his mind and think of God. Even atheists and agnostics (those who reject the thought of God, and those who suspend judgment as to His existence) would benefit from this practice by trying to calm their minds briefly in the daily maelstrom of our existence. I do not conceive of this practice as in any way sectarian. It would be good, however, if people gathered in designated places, for there is power in group effort, and in the vibrations of places set aside for such activity. They could gather in churches, synagogues, mosques, or mandirs, or even in yoga studios, in parks, or in rooms created in their office buildings or homes. They could sit in any position that is comfortable to them. And, for fifteen minutes, they could try to calm their minds.

Since this is a book on yoga, I could propose for them a yoga technique: Mentally watch the breath. Exert no control over it; simply let it flow. As the breath flows in, mentally say, “Hong.” As the breath flows out, mentally follow it with the chant, “Sau”

(pronounced “saw”).

This mantra is based on the Sanskrit words, “Aham” (I), and “Saha” (am He). As Hong-Sau, however, they become a bij, or seed, mantra, and have a calming effect on the mind.

Where should one watch the breath? Well, as the mind becomes calm, one’s attention should shift to the flow of breath at the root of the nose, which is close to the seat of superconsciousness between the eyebrows, in the forehead.

When should one do this practice? It would be good if it were at the same time every day. I would suggest twelve noon as being a generally good time, but for those who are not drowned in their addiction to television (I myself never watch it), a very good alternative might be nine o’clock. If you can get your friends to join you, you might discuss what is the best time for all of you. For even though you be separated in space, there will be among you a unity of consciousness.

It is important that this practice not degenerate into anything sectarian. It is between you and God, or between you and your own conscience.

It is best to sit in the company of others, but if necessity obliges you to sit alone, by no means miss this practice.

Fifteen minutes of this practice every day, engaged in by thousands, or even millions, of people throughout the world could uplift the whole planet.

I should add that, since this morning, I suddenly realized that a great woman saint in India, Anandamayee Ma, proposed basically this same idea many years ago.

## 1-11 | Memory is clinging to (refusing to abandon) any ideas of objects that return to the mind.

Memory is one more vritti, or eddy, in the mind. It, too, must be calmed before perfect enlightenment can be attained. Desires and attachments are the conscious part of our vrittis. Memory is another. So also is the urge to sleep. All these must be overcome before samadhi can be attained. Samadhi, or oneness, comes when we have brought peace to all our vrittis.

## 1-12 | The vrittis are calmed by practice and by non-attachment.

Lahiri Mahasaya used to say, “*Banat, banat, ban jai*—doing, doing, at last, done!” Don’t be constantly looking for results. My Guru used to say, “If you plant a seed, then keep digging it up to see if it is growing, your plant will never grow. Just keep watering it, knowing that this, for the present, is what is needed. At last, one day, it will poke its first shoot above the ground.” He added, “Then keep on watering it, protecting it from insects and from animals (doubts and worldly company) until it grows strong enough to stand on its own.”

## 1-13 | The endeavor to develop even-mindedness is what constitutes spiritual practice.

This sounds simple enough, but what it means is less simple. Every pleasure and emotional joy you experience must be surrendered to equanimity. “This doesn’t really matter to me at all.” Every pain you experience, accept with equanimity, while refusing to define that sensation as pain. When you go to the dentist, take no anesthetic. Tell yourself instead, “This is not pain I’m experiencing. It is only sensation.” Then busy your thoughts with other things: plans for your day’s work at the office, for example, or with thoughts of the dinner you’re going to cook when you get home.

Every suffering that comes to you, expand it into a larger picture of reality. So, someone you love just died? Think of his (or her) happiness in being free from that limiting physical body; don’t think of your own loss.

Or—so, you’ve had news of your own impending death? Cast every outer attachment—whether person, circumstance, possession, or ambition—into crackling flames and watch them joyfully as they disappear from your sight and your cognition.

Or—so, someone has cheated you and left you bankrupt? Tell God, “I am Yours. It is Your job to take care of me. I live only to please You.”

Or—your company is going bankrupt? Do your best, but leave

the results in God's hands. *Nishkam karma*—action without desire for (personal rewards from) the fruits of action: This is the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita.

Or, finally (I'm not going to plague you with too many examples)—you are given an important promotion or award? Realize that the ups and downs of life are mere waves on the surface of the ocean. Get neither excited nor depressed by whatever good or bad occurs to you. All happens by His will. Determine to live in peace, no matter what comes to you in life.

Be inwardly non-attached to everything, so that if you die this very day, you will be able to leave your body in perfect peace and freedom.

An important accompanying thought, however, is never to sink into negative indifference. Non-attachment, yes: that should always be there. But tell yourself inwardly, "I am doing everything in my life to please God, not for personal ego-satisfaction."

1-14 | Spiritual practice becomes firmly grounded when it is undertaken for a long time, without a break, and with deep earnestness.

"Deep earnestness" means that even when you are at the office, or conversing with friends, or playing golf or another sport, or at a party, you should always keep revolving at the back of your mind the thought, "I am doing this as a part of Your play. It means nothing to me, personally, whether I win or lose, enjoy being with friends or am excluded by them, am appreciated for my work or scolded for it. I am always inwardly at peace with Thee."

1-15 | From constant Self-remembrance there comes complete non-attachment to things seen or heard.

Attachments in life arise not only to things seen, but also to those only heard about. Just see how avidly men (especially) study

the *Wall Street Journal* for news of the action in that day's stocks, and how eagerly women (especially) sniff for news of the daily local scandal. When one lives in the consciousness of God, all outer attachments fade away. Remember, the mind ever grows by what it feeds upon.

Brother Lawrence put it beautifully. We should "practice the presence of God." In everything we do, we should make it a point *consciously* to include God in that activity.

1-16 | When one ceases to thirst for outward manifestation, having realized the *Purusha*, one attains supreme non-attachment.

So far, we have not discussed the *gunas*, or qualities of outward manifestation. So let me explain them here. There are three *gunas*: *sattwa*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. According to an ancient Indian legend, when God first created the universe He made everyone perfect. Everyone, accordingly, as soon as he found himself created, sat down in meditation and merged back into his essential being, God. God (the Supreme Spirit) then thought, "I must create delusion." Mankind, finding itself clouded with delusion, went panting after the things of Creation, and so the universe became what we might call "a going concern."

To put it more literally (though still figuratively, for in matters like this it is impossible to be truly literal), when the Ocean of Spirit decided to create, it blew the wind of *maya* (delusion) over the surface of the water, thereby creating waves. The little waves are a good description for *sattwa guna*, for it is easy to see them as manifestations of the vast ocean. The motive power that pushes the waves higher is *rajoguna*. And the tall waves, which obscure the fact that they are all only waves of the one ocean, are *tamoguna*.

Rajoguna, the activating quality, can impel the mind ever outward. In this case it manifests *rajo-tamo* energy. If it impels inward, toward the indwelling Self, it becomes *rajo-sattwa*. In this

way is resolved the dilemma: Why *three* gunas, in a universe where *duality* is the prevailing principle?

Sattwa guna is those qualities which uplift the mind: calmness, non-attachment, kindness, devotion, and the like. Tamoguna is those which lower the mind, making it dull: such qualities as sloth, indifference, dullness (stupidity), an attempt to escape from reality by using drugs, alcohol, or any mind-numbing substance. Rajoguna, the activating quality, is restless, fidgety, and requires constant change. If this guna impels one downward—by selfishly grasping at things, or by anger, hatred, and the enjoyment of bad company—it is rajo-tamas. If one's restlessness impels a person to seek peace, to help others, to work for social upliftment, or to seek out noble or uplifting company, it is manifesting rajo-sattwa.

These qualities of consciousness are present only in the manifested universe. They are dissolved back into Spirit when one's consciousness merges back into the Spirit again.

One may wonder whether the Supreme Spirit, Purusha, is beyond all feeling of love for His creation. Remember, we are speaking here of absolute, impersonal realities. I remember my Guru speaking to me once about how God "eats people." As he did so, he made the appropriate gesture with his right hand!

Divine love is impersonal. But impersonal love is the only true love in existence. Human love usually suffers over the death of a loved one, for example, when in fact that loved one may well have gone to a much happier life. Certainly it is possible to be far, far happier in the astral world than most people are, here on earth, where their emotions are enclosed and suffocated by the thick walls of material reality.

Let's face it, it is the Spirit itself that created delusion. Even Satan is a manifestation of God! Satan is that outward-moving force which brings everything into manifestation, and which tries to keep the universe in a continued state of manifestation. Usually, Satan doesn't trouble the people he has safely in his net, but whenever anyone tries sincerely to escape that net, Satan does his best to pull him back. Thus, saints are submitted to endless barrages as Satan tests the sincerity of their inward calling. Satan's outward pull away from God is unrelenting. The more people submit to it, the more strongly he pulls.

But God's pull is also there. We might put it this way: Satan pulls us to the left, and God pulls us to the right, but neither pulls



us in either direction until we ourselves take the first step. The more we move toward God, however, the more strongly He pulls upon us, with love. And the more we move toward exclusive, ego-satisfaction, the more strongly Satan draws us toward self-involvement and mental darkness. Satan has no love for us, but God's love for us is infinite. It is not personal, but it is not impersonal in the sense of being indifferent. His love is for our souls. The devotee may fall into the delusion that, because God tests the sincerity of his devotion, He therefore doesn't really care about our happiness and well-being. This is a fallacy.

It is well in these matters to study the lives of great saints in all religions. All of them have declared that divine love alone, and divine joy, are the only realities, and the only thing worth seeking in life.

1-17 | Sampragyata samadhi (*sabikalpa samadhi*, the state of conditioned oneness) is still tied to the various functions of the ego.

My Guru usually spoke of this prior state of samadhi, or oneness, as *sabikalpa*, though it is often spoken of, as here, as *sampragyata*. In either case, the reality is the same. Scholars love to trot out this word, and its concomitant, *asampragyata*, to show their deep learning. Yet both words, in their true meaning, take one far beyond all learning! I will use the words my Guru used, *sabikalpa* and *nirbikalpa*.

When one goes very deep into meditation, he goes beyond the reasoning mind, beyond the ego, beyond all the vortices of feeling, and cognizes (I smile as I observe myself using this intellectual word here, *cognizes*, as if to show my own profundity!) the oneness of Spirit. The main thing we have to overcome is our sense of ego. The wave must realize that it is only a manifestation of the vast ocean. The ego must realize that, in essence, it is integral to the infinite Spirit. Only then will it achieve divine freedom.

In *sabikalpa* the meditator realizes that God alone exists. He realizes it, however, as if he were looking through a large picture window. His realization is still *with* and *from* the ego. Thus,

*sabikalpa samadhi* is the first real break from delusion, but it also becomes the final, supreme test of Satan!

For if the ego, seeing its own nature through that window, marvels, “How great am I!” it can, by that very thought, be drawn back into delusion. It then becomes “I, the infinite but nevertheless still real John Brown, have access to infinite power.” Some people, on achieving this state, fall not only from it, but *because of it*! My Guru told me of several saints who had fallen from this almost-free state. I have some reason for believing that I myself may have been so foolish. And that was thousands of years ago! This is no kindergarten playground we entered when we came onto the spiritual path!

People who fall from that state may well think they know better than their own gurus. They *have* power, and may well misuse it. Karma, however, is still generated by their egos, and it can bind them for incarnations.

One must go beyond *sabikalpa* (conditioned oneness) to *nirbikalpa* (unconditioned oneness) before he can safely declare, “I am free!” It is of course helpful to *affirm* one’s freedom, even as he struggles in countless vortices of attachment and desire, for by that affirmation he offers himself into the upward pull of God, and spurns the attractions of Satan. But affirmation, while important, is not enough. You may be languishing of an illness in the hospital, and affirm that you are well. That mere affirmation, however, will not win you release from the hospital.

In *nirbikalpa samadhi*, the soul rises above ego-bondage altogether, and can never be trapped again. In this supreme samadhi state the soul achieves oneness with God. Is the soul, then, completely free? No, for it still has the lingering memory of *past* ego-involvements. It has attained the level of *jivan mukta*. One may go on, still, for lifetimes, until he has released every lingering memory of the thought that it was I, the pirate (let us say) who slew that hapless sailor in a past life, and now realizes that God dreamed the part of that pirate, also.

I asked my Guru once, “But in that state of inner freedom, could one not simply declare, ‘God did it all?’”

“He could,” my Guru replied, “but in that state you don’t really care. Many saints use that tie to bring them back so they can help their disciples.”

He explained then, however, that once a saint has transformed

himself to the realization that God alone, in all those incarnations, has been real, he achieves full liberation, or *moksha*, and becomes a *param mukta*, or completely liberated being.

A fully liberated being who, out of compassion for stumbling humanity, incarnates again in a body is what I have designated an avatar. He returns, unlike lesser saints, with limitless divine power to save others. Such an avatar was Jesus Christ. There have been many others.

We are accustomed, especially in the West, to think that God is “wholly other”—that we must forever remain apart from Him. The thought that we actually *become* God is a staggering concept; it sounds almost blasphemous. But in fact, God is the only reality there is. In our egos, we are eternally separate. But when we rise above the limitations of ego-consciousness there is simply nowhere else to *be*!

There is the ego we know in our physical bodies: the soul attached to the physical body, in which place a person thinks of himself as, let us say, the local butcher, the local bully, the man who boasts of his own abilities, shouts down all opposition, preens himself, perhaps, on his amazing skills, and fancies himself quite the ladies’ man. One may think, “*That man—a saint?!* ” But, yes, even that man eventually! One thinks of a true saint as forever self-effacing, and never accepting credit for anything. And suddenly we are asked to see him as God Himself?! Impossible! But yes, that is what every liberated soul becomes.

In a one-act play of mine, *The Jewel in the Lotus*, a materialistic merchant, Romesh, is told that even he is Brahman. “Hah!” he cries to his son. “Did you hear that, Boy? From now on, you’d better listen to *me*!” But he has misunderstood the fundamental teaching that it isn’t he, Romesh, who is God. It is the indwelling soul of all beings, most of whom are outwardly clothed in altogether too human forms.

When the soul rises above the need to return to earthly form, as the individuality expressed in that soul leaves behind all earthly desires and attachments, the soul is still encased in its astral body. In fact, the ego has its origin in the astral body. In that body it is not so firmly encased as it was—as though in concrete—but it still has the limitation of separateness from other beings.

Once the soul has overcome its attachment to the astral world, it is out of ego-consciousness, as such, altogether. But it is still

involved with its causal body. Its powers, in that subtle body, are almost limitless, but it is still involved in a gossamer of thoughts and thoughtforms that prevent it from full mergence in the Infinite.

It is only when those last cobwebs of thought are shaken off that the soul attains full union with God. At that point, yes, one becomes one with God: one *becomes* God. This, to an orthodox Christian, can only seem blasphemy. No logic, however, can oppose the reality itself. There is nothing in all existence but God Himself. You, in your deepest nature, *are* God!

1-18 | Unconditioned (asampragyata, or *nirbikalpa*) samadhi occurs with the cessation of all conscious thought. Subconscious memories (of past incarnations) alone remain. (No “I” remains to bind one’s consciousness.)

Except for those past-life memories, I-consciousness, in *nirbikalpa samadhi* has been stamped out and demolished utterly. In effect, the soul sees itself as already one with God. My Guru told me that very few saints on earth have gone beyond this state, to complete liberation. I pursued this interesting subject with him one day, and he told me that, apart from our own line of gurus, the only saints he’d met who had attained full liberation were Swami Pranabananda (the “saint with two bodies,” so called in the *Autobiography*), Ram Gopal Muzumdar (the “sleepless saint” as he is labeled in that book), and one other saint whom he didn’t mention in those pages, Sri Rama Yogi (Yogi Ramiah as Paul Brunton calls him in *A Search in Secret India*). I myself had the great blessing of remaining with this great saint for four days at his home near Nellore, in Andhra Pradesh, in 1960.

1-19 | Yogis who have not attained the highest state by the time they die remain attached to *Prakriti* (Nature), owing to the ego’s continued identification with

outwardness.

There are two sorts of yogis: those who have attained their goal, and those who are working toward that attainment. In truth, only a person who has achieved the goal deserves to be called a yogi, since yoga means oneness, or union (with God). Even so, one may legitimately also be called a yogi who is only practicing to achieve that goal, even as it is useful to affirm success in anything one undertakes. By this token, it may prove an aid to success to call oneself a businessman, even when he is just setting out to become one; an artist, even when he still only aspires to become one; a mountain climber, even when one is only climbing his first mountain.

The yogi who has not yet attained the final goal, however, cannot yet claim success. He may have achieved calmness, non-attachment, deep devotion, and other prizes along the spiritual path, but if his ego is still identified with outwardness, death will not release him from the need to return to earth in another body.

1-20 | For the others, that highest state is attained through faith (based on experience), strength of will, mindfulness (retaining constantly the awareness of God's presence), conditioned oneness (*sabikalpa samadhi*), and discrimination.

For those who do attain the goal, true yoga may be attained not only by the practice of yoga techniques, but also through right application. Patanjali lists these forms of right application. Faith, the first on the list, means far more than belief, which is, traditionally, the criterion of a true Christian. Belief alone is like a hypothesis, rather, in science. The scientist must have a hypothesis before he can conduct tests to discover whether it is true. Belief on the spiritual path is important, for without it one will not even follow the path. Faith, however, depends on results; the greater the results, the greater the faith. As success in any scientific effort demands also devotion to the goal, so, the greater the faith, the

greater also the devotion (in this case, to the goal of oneness with God).

The halfhearted seeker will never find God. To achieve success on the divine pilgrimage requires strong will power. The reason for this condition is that the tests on the path are many and, often, severe. Some of these tests may be called temptations of Satan: that lower part of human nature which tries to lure mankind downward into re-indulging in the senses, and into a worldly life. Other tests come from the simple need to burn up all our past karma. The deeper the devotion, the greater the tests the devotee is able to bear. And God also wants to know whether the devotees who seek Him are truly sincere.

To find God, one must also keep the thought of Him, and of one's spiritual goal, constantly in mind.

The conditioned oneness of *sabikalpa samadhi* is a very high state, but one more easily attainable if, while meditating, one thinks of himself as sitting surrounded by vast space. When one first sits to meditate, it will help for him to gaze, mentally, through vast, empty space: millions of miles downward, upward, to the left, and high above. He should not move a muscle, but should rather try to relax so deeply that he is not aware of his body.

Discrimination is the last “mental application.” It is easy to delude oneself. For instance, one may see visions. Are they real, or imaginary? Right discrimination can help make this determination. A real vision will bring with it a heightened consciousness; a feeling of bliss; clearer awareness; above all, it will usually be in some way life-changing. False visions may be beautiful, but if they don't change one's awareness, or one's life, they are worse than useless: they constitute a temptation.

1-21 | With keen and one-pointed practice, this (highest) attainment comes easily.

“Keen” means intense. “One-pointed” means concentrated—not letting any thoughts, no matter how interesting, divert the yogi from his focus on what he is attempting. Both these aspects of a person's spiritual efforts are difficult, for one thing because of past

habit; for another, because of the mind's constant call to outwardness.

## 1-22 | The time required for success depends also on whether one's practice is mild, medium, or intense.

To the modern mind, intensity seems like tension. It is important not to let effort be defined by any tension, either physical or mental. This, in our times especially, seems a difficult teaching. Mild effort is easy enough to accept, somewhat passively; medium also seems relatively easy. Both may mean more than treating the matter as a subject for bridge table discussion, but neither seems to call for that sort of effort which worldly people consider fanatical. Yet, in fact, all three of these degrees of effort imply levels of deep sincerity. *Intense* effort requires whole-hearted dedication. To seek God, one must seek Him as Jesus taught, "with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." The different levels of intensity begin at the deepest of which one is capable at the time.

Luckily, the word "also" is added here. For to whole-heartedness must be added the truths mentioned in aphorisms 20 and 21.

## 1-23 | Otherwise, through devotion and complete self-offering to God (this highest samadhi can be attained).

My Guru, even though his path was the path of technique, of Kriya Yoga, stressed the supreme importance of devotion and self-offering. Another teaching he stressed to his direct disciples, one which Patanjali (I don't know why) seems to have overlooked, though I am perfectly willing to admit that I may not have understood him on this point, was attunement to the consciousness of the guru. In the Gospel of St. John we read, regarding Jesus Christ, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." There can be no such essential difference between

the teachings of one God-realized master and another, for they all speak from the same level of awareness. Therefore, it is more than possible that I have missed something in Patanjali's teachings, for they are very deep.

To me, my Guru said, "God will not come to you until the end of life. Death itself will be the final sacrifice you'll have to make." My whole life has been spent in giving to others in my Guru's name. I am happy to have done so. And I feel increasing bliss, complete non-attachment, sincere love for all mankind, and indifference to everything but God. But I don't see that I fit very well into many of the categories, or conditions, that Patanjali has stipulated for the advanced soul. On the other hand, I remember one man during the early days at Ananda who devoted many hours every day to meditating. All he evidenced to the rest of us was arrogance, and a tendency to blame everyone else for the pettiest faults.

Still, I admit that I'm a little bit puzzled.

## 1-24 | Ishwara is the Supreme Self, unaffected by any affliction, karma (action), consequence thereof, or impression of desires.

This is the state of consciousness of the Supreme. We should try to maintain our own consciousness as high, therefore, as possible. When afflictions come, we should accept them and not think of them as affecting ourselves. Moreover, we should not even see them as afflictions.

When the blows of karma strike us in our lives, no matter how heavy the blow, we should not lament, but rather welcome their freeing influence. While we are forced to undergo the pains of karmic consequences—perhaps receiving an unfair demotion at work; perhaps being falsely accused in a court of law; perhaps afflicted unjustly by opprobrium—we should bear those contretemps cheerfully, as does God, by telling Him, "I live forever unshakably in Thy bliss."

When desires arise in the mind, we should tell ourselves (even when the power of delusion makes us submit to them), "It is not *I* who have this desire. It is merely the power of delusion acting



through me.”

We are children of God, and should conduct our lives in that consciousness even if we are still, for the present, steeped in delusion. As my Guru often said, “The worst sin is to call yourself a sinner.”

## 1-25 | In Him is fully developed the seed of omniscience.

All things—even the smallest atom—contain that seed. Evolution is the manifestation of consciousness as it expands to reclaim its place of origin in omniscience.

In a book of mine, written many years ago, I show that Darwin’s Theory of Evolution is mechanistic and therefore wrong. Here Patanjali explains why it is wrong. Consciousness is manifested in everything, everywhere. Survival of the fittest is fine as an explanation of what happens, but if a leopard is born in the jungle without spots, it is intelligent enough to move to an environment where spotlessness will not be a disadvantage. If it has a tawny skin, it might move to the desert where its movements will be less easily observed.

## 1-26 | Unconditioned by time, He is the Supreme Instructor of even the most ancient of teachers.

In India, antiquity commands great respect. Thus, God is the Teacher of all teachers—not because He is the oldest, but because His existence transcends time itself.

How could God be conditioned by time? To create the universe, space was needed. To create time, there had to be movement through space. Both space and time are delusions.

Time is inextricable from movement; movement is inextricable from space. The time it will take you to find God, therefore, is essentially equal to the time you yourself decide that it shall be. That decision is not God’s to make: It is yours! The one catch is, you

cannot make that decision so long as you continue to abide under the delusion of time.

Our planet and solar system undergo cycles of time in which galactic influences submit humanity to rising and falling levels of awareness. Owing to our current position in the present cycle, we are a little over one hundred years into an age of energy. And everywhere, today, one hears the word “energy.” As we advance into this age, which will endure a total of 2,000 years (not counting the “bridge” periods of 200 years each before and afterwards), we will be able to travel to distant planets and, essentially, see through the delusion of space.

In the next and higher age, due to endure 3,000 years, time, too, will be seen to be a delusion. In the descending, 12,000-year cycle that preceded our present rise toward ever-higher awareness, at least two sages wrote about the lives of people who were as yet unborn—many, in fact, living today! I myself have come upon some of these ancient texts while traveling in India. The accuracy of those seemingly impossible predictions is enough to stagger the mind.

Time, space, and movement, however, are delusions. The color shirt you, as an individual, will put on today was known thousands of years ago! The only free will you have, really, is the decision whether to turn toward God or away from Him.

## **1-27 | The expression of Ishwara is the hidden sound of AUM.**

Several of the translations I have consulted call AUM the “mystic” sound. I do not believe Patanjali would have used that word. In fact, the Sanskrit word *Pranavah*, used here, means the cosmic sound of the universe. It is not mystic or mysterious, and certainly not for those who are able to hear it. But it is hidden from our physical ears.

AUM can be heard in meditation, especially. It is the vibration which made possible the manifestation of the whole universe. When the Supreme Spirit, Purusha, decided to produce Creation, (as I stated earlier) it caused the storm of *maya*, or delusion, to blow over the surface of the vast ocean of consciousness. Thus appeared

the waves of duality. Those waves—vibrations on the vast ocean—produced everything in outward existence. Science declares that matter itself is only a vibration of energy. The ancient seers of India declared that energy is a vibration of thoughts, and that those thoughts are only vibrations on what I have called the vast ocean of consciousness.

AUM comes in three distinct vibrations—sounds, therefore. The first sound, known in legend as the Creator Brahma, is a higher sound. The second (the Preserver Vishnu in ancient legend) is somewhat lower. The third (the Destroyer, Shiva) is a deep, all-dissolving sound.

These three special deities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, are really only personifications of the three aspects, or phases, of AUM. None of the Hindu images of the gods are idols. They are, rather, symbols of *ideals*. Shiva as the destroyer of the universe may be considered beneficent even as physical death is, in truth, beneficent, releasing most souls for a happier life (however temporary, as long as they must return to earth in new bodies) in the astral world.

Incarnations of Vishnu are avatars whose manifestation of God is a divine attempt to preserve dharma, or righteousness, on earth.

The first vibration of AUM brings all things into manifestation. The second keeps them manifested. The third dissolves them back again into the Supreme Spirit.

It is similar, in a way, to the sound a car makes: first, when it is still being brought up to speed, and emits a relatively high sound; second, after it has reached the desired speed, and emits a steady hum; and third, as it comes to a stop and gives a sort of growl.

AUM is often, and legitimately, written OM in English, which language contains few pure vowels. In English, that O is pronounced O-U. (In England, in fact, the sound is taken even further, making it E-O-U.) But for correctness in the sound of AUM itself, the O-U suffices, with the first syllable pronounced, not o, but a as in *what*. In most other languages, AUM, when written OM, is pronounced somewhat as we would if we rounded out the name, Tom.

In Sanskrit, the letter A has two sounds: a as in “*what*,” and a as in “*father*.” AUM should be pronounced with that short first a; then u as the double o in “*moon*,” and m as it is, normally, in every language I know. These three sounds stand for Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. When these sounds are heard (preferably in the right ear) in

meditation, the first is a higher sound; the second, medium; the third, low.

Therefore is the threefold AUM chanted first in a higher register (three rising notes), then medium (two rising notes), then low (again, two slow, rising notes).

AUM, heard in meditation, is like a steady, low hum, growing in intensity as one's meditation deepens until its vibration seems to rumble throughout the body. To listen to AUM is an advanced yoga technique, and one properly received in person from a qualified instructor.

1-28 | To repeat it (truly) in deep meditation (i.e., to listen to and become absorbed in AUM) reveals its true meaning.

To repeat AUM truly is not merely to repeat it with the voice or the lips, but to merge in the actual sound itself. One hears it first in the right ear, then in both ears, then gradually throughout the body. As the devotee absorbs himself in that sound, he gradually realizes that his little body is only a little vibration of the great vibration of AUM, expanding to infinity. When he attains oneness with that Cosmic Vibration, he enters what is called AUM samadhi. He then perceives all manifested Creation as consisting of the innumerable vibrations of Cosmic AUM.

The Om technique is one of the best ways to overcome ego-consciousness. This is because the best way to overcome ego-consciousness—the main obstacle to spiritual enlightenment—is to expand one's consciousness beyond the confines of the body. This is accomplished by listening to, and merging into, the cosmic vibration of AUM.

1-29 | Through meditation on the inner sound of AUM, one gains the power to overcome all obstacles, and to realize his oneness with the inner Self.

Paramhansa Yogananda said, “When you are in AUM, nothing can touch you.”

This whole universe is God’s dream. The dream was made possible by the manifestation of the Cosmic Vibration. All things in Creation are manifestations of AUM. When you are in tune with that vibration, no matter what devastating events occur around you, you will be protected—miraculously, it will seem, (though in cosmic fact there is no such thing as a miracle). When the atom bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two spiritual communities, one a Franciscan and the other a Jesuit, although located near the epicenter of those terrible events, were untouched. There is no need to study the mechanics of such occurrences. Consciousness is the *cause* of everything, and the motive force behind every mechanism. It can change everything. There is nothing to be astonished about in such protection.

For these reasons I get impatient with the arrogance of many modern scientists. Their methods, moreover, are so lumbering and slow. Reasoning is like an oxcart, bumping along over every rut in the road, and taking forever to reach destinations that ought to have been reached very quickly.

I remember my exasperation, as a young man, having stated something about the folly of one’s having any attachments. The man I was speaking to replied cautiously, “Oh, I don’t know.” He had been raised on the cautious, scientific approach. Such philosophical timidity drove me wild! There are lower, but there are also higher ways. An airplane can soar over the roughest of terrain, reaching its destination quickly whereas an oxcart might require days, months, years! Attunement with God, finally, and with AUM, can accomplish in a moment what scientists may debate and ponder and test for decades. It is wearying to play their game. And they take themselves so seriously!

When a person is absorbed in AUM, the cosmic dream adapts to his needs. He may be beset by hoodlums: suddenly, they will be distracted, or lose interest in him. He may find himself in a storm at sea: the waves will not drown him. This situation actually arose once in the life of Dr. Lewis, Yogananda’s first Kriya Yoga disciple in America. The disciple was out in a boat off Martha’s Vineyard when a mighty storm arose. He remembered the Guru’s words about being in AUM, and remained safe and secure until he returned safely to shore.

On a more immediately practical level: We are approaching very hard times, economically, perhaps politically, perhaps even on a more-than-global level. (I remember my Guru declaring once in church, “You don’t know what a *terrible* cataclysm is coming!” But he said, “Those who love God will be protected.”)

Don’t think this world has only a push-me-pull-you kind of reality. When your consciousness is right, and particularly when you are anchored in AUM, nothing can possibly go wrong.

1-30 | Disease, dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, sensuality, false perception, missing the point, instability, and backsliding: these are the obstacles.

If we look at these obstacles all together, we see that all of them, except the first, relate to mental weaknesses. Essentially, even disease is harmful to the meditator on a mental level, especially. But let us take these obstacles one by one.

Disease, I have said, is not only physical but also mental. If one has trouble breathing, however, then certainly he cannot practice breathing exercises as well as he should. But the pain of disease, the weakness that accompanies it, the discomfort it inflicts on the mind—all these distractions make meditation, or even peace of mind, very difficult to achieve. It is important, therefore, for the yogi to keep himself fit and healthy.

Many spiritual seekers, however, devote altogether too much energy to the health of their physical bodies. The body comes last in importance beside the importance of developing a right attitude, and the need to keep the thought of God uppermost in the mind.

There is also the simple fact that illness, and diseases of all kinds, may come to us as a means of helping us to burn up our past karma. Those who seek God sincerely are often afflicted with such physical tests. The great Muslim woman saint Rabiah said, “He is no true lover of God who does not forget his suffering in contemplation of the Divine Beloved.”

Dullness, of course, is primarily if not entirely mental, and is a quality of *tamas*. So also, indeed, are most of the other obstacles. What is one to do, if he is truly dull? He has no desire to rise above

his dullness. The best thing for him is to work under someone who has more energy than he. On the other hand, however, temporary dullness, at one time or another, afflicts most people. It can be overcome by will power.

I remember many years ago being afflicted, not by dullness so much as a spirit of rebellion. I simply refused to meditate. I remember lying on my bed and reading Shakespeare—almost sensuously enjoying the flow of words! Well, that may not seem so bad, but it was the spirit in which I read him. I still look back on that evening with a certain pleasure! You can't keep your nose constantly to the grindstone. A little relapse into dullness is not necessarily bad, so long as you know from the beginning that it will be temporary. If your mind feels dull, therefore, see it as a brief relapse. But if the sickness is more persistent, make it a point, first, to seek out positive, energetic company. Don't give in to what amounts to a spiritual disease. Exert your will power to make an energetic push for at least a few minutes at a time, until you find yourself climbing out of that mud pit. I have seen too many devotees allow dullness to pull them down so deep into sloth that it became a permanent return to worldly consciousness.

Doubt is one of the worst obstacles. As Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, "The doubter is the most miserable of mortals."

Doubting is different when it is a positive means of ascertaining the truth about something. We may call this practice only questioning. Unless one questions a truth, how can he be sure he has truly understood it? On this point, indeed, I am obliged to agree with the scientific method. I myself questioned my Guru on countless points, and I believe it deepened my understanding of his teachings.

Doubt as a spiritual obstacle, then, means to assume at the outset that a teaching is wrong. Such doubt is simply a bad habit, a mental tendency which prevents one from committing himself wholeheartedly to anything. The cure for such doubt is love. I myself once went through a period of doubting my Guru. It was my love for him that pulled me out of that valley of darkness.

Carelessness—the next obstacle—comes from not paying attention to what one is doing. This mental habit can be cured by finding a subject that particularly interests you, and then pursuing it intensely for as long as it holds your interest; then applying yourself in the same way to another subject—each time, to only one

subject at a time.

Laziness (when it is not merely tamasic, in which case it cannot rightly be called an obstacle, for one is not even interested in trying to uplift himself) is the inertia that impedes a person's attempts to progress. He wakes up in the morning and thinks, "Oh, let me lie here just a little longer, before getting up to meditate." Or he thinks, "It would be good to discipline myself, but let me just wait until tomorrow!" To overcome this bad tendency, he must exert his will to cry, "No!" and cry (out loud, if necessary!), "I'll begin this very moment!" A little effort is all it takes. Bit by bit, he'll find himself climbing resolutely out of that otherwise ever-widening pit.

Sensuality (the next obstacle) is, Yogananda said, "the greatest delusion." Reflect mentally on the moods and unhappiness that follow every indulgence in it. It is an insult to your soul to believe that, to be happy, you need the sensation of being touched physically. You are not this body! Sensuality is physically and mentally debilitating. It robs one of all finer sensitivity. As people often laugh as a bluff to conceal their feelings of guilt, so laughter at any censure of sensuality is virtually a proof of guilt over its indulgence. The way to overcome sensuality is resolutely to affirm freedom from all bodily imperatives. Even when forced by past habit to succumb to sensuality, mentally say, "I am not succumbing to this exercise in futility." And every time one fails, he should never say, "I have failed." He should affirm, rather, "I have not yet succeeded."

False perception, the next obstacle, is a debility more common than many imagine. A person meditates many hours a day, and someone else tells him, "You're shirking your duties." But what is his *true* duty if not to seek God? One person addresses another with unnecessary harshness, and when scolded for having done so replies, "But shouldn't we be truthful?" False perception can be overcome best of all by strict self-truthfulness. In the first case, you may indeed be shirking valid responsibilities out of laziness, in which case you should work more, and meditate a little less. And in the second case, to be truly truthful is also to be kind to others.

Missing the point, the next obstacle, means allowing problems of the moment to make one forget why he embarked on the spiritual path in the first place. A co-worker, for example, may "get his goat." Instead of remaining centered and peaceful, he loses his temper. Or someone proposes a venture that will surely bring him



financial profits, and he embraces it eagerly. There is nothing wrong with making a legitimate profit if one so desires, but that word *eagerly* spells danger for the devotee. To miss the point is to forget why and what you are doing, in seeking God.

Instability is a threat to the equanimity that everyone should develop on the spiritual path. It is a good practice for the devotee to develop even-mindedness. Imagine the worst calamity that could befall you, and mentally accept it with a smile. Imagine the greatest good fortune that could attend you, and tell yourself, “All things are born of duality. Good fortune today is certain to result in ill fortune—if not tomorrow then in a week, a month, or, inevitably, sooner or later. I will not identify myself with either good or ill.

Backsliding happens when people’s devotion diminishes. When you feel tempted to go back to former ways of living, reflect mentally on all the reasons that brought you to the spiritual path to begin with. The world will be no better, if you go back to its ways now. Rather, you will constantly regret what you have abandoned—the peace of meditation; the joy of seeking the only truth there is; the fellowship of uplifting friends, men and women with noble, worthy ideals.

## 1-31 | Accompanying the obstacles are moodiness, despair, nervous agitation, and agitated breathing.

Moodiness is a temptation, the fruit of sense-indulgence in the past. It cannot be reasoned away. Moodiness is a temptation of Satan. It has a certain magnetism, causing people who possess that tendency almost, in a sense, to enjoy it. Yet it brings them unhappiness. It comes from within, and may have no outer cause at all. Moodiness depends on the level at which one’s energy is centered in the spine. This is not to say that when the energy is centered low in the spine one will necessarily become moody. He may become angry, instead, or lustful, or avaricious. But all of such feelings are moods of a kind, even if they don’t induce the depression we associate with the word “moodiness.” The best solution to irrational, dark moods is to change one’s level of consciousness: Concentrate deeply at the point between the

eyebrows. Even a few minutes of this practice may suffice to drive the darkest moods away.

Despair is usually due to some outer misfortune. A person may suddenly lose his job, his fortune—indeed, everything in life that he has considered meaningful. It is not unusual for people in this predicament to commit suicide. And what a final disaster, to cap all the others! Those who resort to the “way out” of killing themselves face the burden of having to experience a similar disaster again, with the added burden of seeing themselves already in the role of failure. It may take them incarnations to climb out of that pit.

The way out of despair is to know that everyone has the divine flame burning within him. Know that no one is ever completely destroyed. Death itself is but a pleasant release, if it comes naturally. One may have a very heavy load of past karma to bear; maybe his past sin was that he slaughtered many in a Nazi concentration camp; maybe he was a wealthy stockbroker who brought financial disaster to millions. Even so, at his center, he remains forever the unchanging Atman, the divine Self. That spark of divinity within him will make him *want* to correct past wrongs; it will make him grateful for the chance to pay off past karma, as slowly or as quickly as possible. Beneath even the greatest despair there lurks—strange as it may seem!—a certain gratitude; an awareness that one had that debt to pay, and that he has now done something, at least, to expiate his wrongs of the past.

It helps very much to be aware that reincarnation is a universal reality, but even without it your soul knows what you need, and is grateful for every step you take out of delusion.

There is no such thing as eternal damnation. Nor is there such a thing as eternal failure, or irredeemable disaster. Even if you are obliged to starve to death, life itself will lift you to a shining future.

Nervous agitation brings on physical tension, restlessness, muscle cramping, and bodily pain. All of these discomforts can be relieved, or eliminated, by deep relaxation.

Agitated breathing is usually a sign of mental distress, although it of course has physical causes also. Fear, anxiety, agitated hope—these are among the main causes for the breath’s becoming agitated. Be calm within, no matter what happens to you. Allow nothing to affect your peace of mind.

## 1-32 | The practice of one-pointed concentration is the best way to rise above (both) the obstacles and the (physical and mental disturbances) that accompany them.

One-pointed concentration at the spiritual center between the eyebrows, the seat of superconsciousness, causes delusions and imperfections to vanish before the dawn of absolute awareness.

The seat of ego-consciousness is in the medulla oblongata, at the base of the brain. That is why proud people hold their heads stiffly back, and why they look down their noses at the world (the Italian expression is “*guardare sotto il naso* (to look beneath the nose).” The more enlightened a person is, the more his center of awareness moves forward in the brain, until an enlightened saint lives from the center between the eyebrows, the location of the spiritual eye. The spiritual eye, in fact, seen in meditation, is a reflection of the energy as it enters the body through the medulla oblongata. It is a golden circle, with a field of dark blue light inside, and, at the center, a silver-white, five-pointed star.

The golden circle represents the light of the astral universe. The dark blue light inside represents the causal universe. And the silver-white star in the center represents the Supreme Spirit beyond Creation. If you are blessed to see the spiritual eye, focus your concentration on the star in the middle.

Many years ago, in Italy, we went to a glass works in Murano to have an imitation of the spiritual eye made for the temple at our center near Assisi. When we described the spiritual eye to the workman there, he exclaimed in amazement, “So *that* is what I see when I pray deeply!” This is not a subjective image. It is a universal truth.

One time I was at my Guru’s desert retreat. We were having lunch out of doors, when a dog belonging to a neighbor came over and gazed at our food hungrily. My Guru said to us, “Look at that dog. He is so eager to get a bite of the food that his eyebrow is furrowed in concentration at the spiritual eye!” Of course, Master didn’t mean the dog was *seeing* the spiritual eye. Its concentration, however, was focused at that point where, in devotees, the spiritual eye will inevitably, sooner or later, make itself manifest.

All delusions begin with, and are centered in, ego-

consciousness. The thought, “I love apple pie,” forms a vortex around that thought, “I.” It then settles at a point in the spine from which the thought, “apple pie,” settles to await fulfillment—opposite the stomach. There are countless such vortices, or vrittis, in the spine. A person might think, “How can one spine hold so many vrittis?” but in fact, of all things in the universe, from the largest to the smallest, man’s body is more or less middle in size. Space in this earthly dimension really has nothing to do with these energies. It is those countless vrittis of conscious energy which keep one’s energy from rising in complete concentration toward the spiritual eye. This is why Jesus said we must love God not only with all our heart and will, but also with all our *strength*.

There are countless correlations between the yoga teachings of Krishna (and the teachings of ancient India including, of course, Patanjali) and the teachings in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. For example, the star which the wise men saw “in the East” was the star in the spiritual eye. They saw it in the East because, according to ancient wisdom, east is the forehead in the body. (*Kedem* is the word in Hebrew: “That which lies before.”) The Bible tells us the wise men saw the star in the east, and then followed it. However, the *direction* they took was *westward*! Here we have a clear hint that the star they saw was the star in the spiritual eye. What that story clearly says to those who understand is that God Himself, as an avatar, had incarnated in the body of little Jesus.

I wrote, above, of “delusions and imperfections.” Delusions are those thoughts which make us think we’ll find fulfillment in outwardness. As long as the energy flows outward from the spine, it cannot flow inward and upward toward the point between the eyebrows, just behind which is that point in the frontal lobe of the brain which is the center of superconsciousness in the body.

The more we concentrate at that center, the more we feel drawn to it, toward a state of egolessness, and toward a release of the ego-centered vrittis in the spine.

**1-33 | By cultivating attitudes of friendliness toward those who are happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous, and disregard for**

**the wicked, the vrittis (vortices of attachment and desire) are dissolved in undisturbed calmness.**

Everyone in the world wants happiness. There is no one alive who really prefers to be unhappy—though moods can cause strange twists in people’s minds, temporarily! The desire for happiness is because all beings are projections of the consciousness of God, whose nature is ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss (Satchidananda). In our souls, all of us long to return to that Bliss, for it is our native state of being. Right attitudes help us to turn all our thoughts, all our energies, toward God. In fact, we don’t really have to plead with God to give us His grace. Grace is with us always: it flows through us whenever our attitude is right.

Divine grace is like sunlight on the side of a building. We’ve no need to invite it to come in. All we need to do is open the curtains in the rooms of our own consciousness!

Patanjali is presenting here the attitudes essential for the devotee who wants bliss to flow consciously through his being. A few years ago, in Florence, Italy, I had a dream in which I saw a crowd of people passing me on the city streets: avaricious businessmen, criminal mafiosi, persons of ordinary worldly consciousness, saintly people. The thought came to me in the dream: “All these people want the same thing I do: happiness! They seek it on various octaves, but our universal longing for happiness is an unbreakable bond which unites us all!”

Since then, I have felt that everyone I saw, everywhere, was my brother or sister. I often smile at complete strangers. Better still, I often find that complete strangers smile at me, sometimes even before I smile at them! This attitude of friendliness (which is easier to feel toward people who are themselves happy) is essential to all who would feel God’s grace in their hearts. Anger (which comes when people want things, circumstances, or other people to be different from what they are); hatred (which comes when we thwart other people’s wishes); jealousy (which comes when we feel anyone owes us more than he is giving us); dislike (when our tastes become too narrowly defined); disdain (when we feel pride in our own self-definitions); and countless other ego-enclosing attitudes are dissipated by sincere friendliness, which begins with a friendly attitude toward those whose hearts flow out in happiness to others.

Compassion toward those who are unhappy means to tune in, from a higher level, to such people's unhappiness—to feel, with them, their reason for it, but not to be affected by it personally.

Delight in the virtuous means delight in virtue, first, as one has personally experienced it in himself. Such delight comes primarily after the experience of virtue. There is also a saying in the ancient scriptures, “One moment in the company of a saint will be your raft over the ocean of delusion.” The delight one feels in the presence of someone who is more virtuous than oneself is an aspiration toward perfection—a longing in the heart: “I hope someday to become like that!”

Disregard for the wicked is important because, although we should love everyone as a manifestation of God, we must realize at the same time that good and evil, both, have their own type of magnetism. We should love everyone, including wicked people, but these should be loved not (so to speak) to their faces, but more abstractly, with the heart kept somewhat aloof. To do as Saint Francis did, seeking out three criminals and converting them with his love, requires great spiritual strength.

Magnetism is a kind of energy we emit, as electric currents form a field of energy—magnetism—around a wire. You should avoid the company of people whose consciousness is lower in the spine than yours is. Many such people have little influence, but there are people whose energy, and therefore magnetism, for wickedness is strong. Going among such people can endanger you, spiritually. Especially avoid looking into their eyes; that is where the exchange of magnetism is especially strong. And when going among crowds, or eating in places where the vibrations are heterogeneous, make it a point always to keep a spiritual bodyguard with you: spiritual friends whose company you find uplifting.

The reason I mentioned eating places is that, when one is eating, his energy is geared for *absorbing* vibrations. Try also, therefore, to eat only in harmonious, peaceful places.

By taking the above precautions, you will find it easier to remain calmly centered in yourself, and, therefore, to “neutralize the vortices of feeling in your heart.”

But I'd like to mention one more thought which has been helpful to me through the years. I have had an extremely busy life, and I know modern times push most of us to produce! produce! produce! My personal rule of life has always been this: I never let

myself do anything that might wrongly affect my inner peace.

## 1-34 | The vrittis (attachments and desires) can also be neutralized by calming, and retaining outward, the exhalation of the breath.

Breathlessness (the condition necessary for deep meditation) comes after exhalation.\* Most people think that *prana* means breath, but that is only because the yoga tradition had to be passed on through Kali Yuga, a dark age which lasts twenty-four hundred years (1,200 descending; 1,200 ascending). Mankind emerged partially from that dark age only in 1,700 A.D., and fully only in 1,900 A.D. During those twenty-four hundred years, man forgot that energy is the reality behind matter, and that matter is really composed of vibrations of energy. Therefore people couldn't understand that movements of energy in the *idā* and *pingalā* nerve channels, or *naḍis*, are related to the breath. Instead, they took breath as the reality.

What happens is that, when we inhale, energy goes up the *idā* nerve channel in the spine, beginning and ending on the left side. Indeed, it is that upward flow of energy which *causes* the physical inhalation. A baby, when it is first born, must inhale before it can make its first cry. And when people are excited, pleased, or delighted, they inhale. When they are sad or disappointed, they sigh. And when people die, the downward flow of energy through *pingalā*, the nerve channel on the right side of the spine, causes their last physical act: a long exhalation. (Those who eat fish can see these two nerve channels in the skeleton.)

*Pranayama*, usually thought of as breath control, actually means “energy control.” Because the upward and downward movements of energy in the spine are so closely related to the breath, it usually works well enough to keep with the thought, “breath control,” but in this sutra we can better understand Patanjali's use of the word if we realize that, when the energy goes down the spine, and then at that point goes inward into the deep spine (the *sushumna*), the rising energy raises the *Kundalini* (the negative pole in the body, opposite the positive pole at the top of the head). As Kundalini

passes upward through the five *chakras*, or nerve centers in the spine, it interiorizes the energy in each, thus bringing, finally, spiritual enlightenment.

Kundalini is described as a serpent power. When electricity is introduced into a copper wire, it creates a spiraling force of magnetism. Thus Kundalini, as it moves upward in the spine, often causes even the outer body to rotate, sometimes with quite amazing force. Sometimes this movement, more gentle, causes the body only to sway forwards and backwards. Davening, a practice common in Judaism, is really only an attempt, passed down by tradition, to imitate this movement of Kundalini. It is an effort to induce from outside the effects of the devotion that accompanies this rising energy in the spine.

As the exhaled breath is stilled outwardly, true meditation becomes possible.

## 1-35 | Otherwise, concentration on subtle sense perceptions can bring about steadiness of mind.

We have in reality ten senses, not five. There are our outer senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch, and there are also our inner *power* of hearing, of sight, smell, taste, and touch. By concentrating on the inner light, for example, which appears in the forehead during meditation, one achieves deep calmness. Again, by concentrating on the inner sounds, which appear especially in the *right* ear, one goes beyond the body and realizes himself as a supra-physical reality.

The reason I emphasize the right ear is not only that that is what tradition teaches, but also because modern physiologists have discovered that there is a point in the brain, just above the right ear, which gives rise, when stimulated, to psychic experiences.

We have these subtle senses because they are the senses of our astral bodies, which become active when we shed these physical “husks.”

One can also concentrate on the subtle senses of smell and taste. My Guru said once, “God can also come to you as a thousand wonderful tastes, all crushed into one.” I confess that, when I heard



these words, they were a great stimulus to my devotion! But I think that these two senses, being less closely related to consciousness, are not likely to take us very deep!

The inner sense of touch is that which comes from *feeling* our presence in all space. In the physical body, however, stimulation of the sense of touch leads to sexual desire and, therefore, to body attachment.

## 1-36 | Otherwise, (calmness of mind comes) by concentrating on the supreme, ever-blissful light within.

I have already covered this form of concentration in the preceding sutra. Our separateness from Spirit came first with movement at, let us say, the surface of the ocean of Divine Consciousness. Everything we are, as outward manifestations of Creation, is an expression of AUM, the Cosmic Vibration. The primary manifestations of AUM, however, are the subtle light and the subtle sound.

Some people teach that this inner light is seen by concentrating at the tip of the nose. This is a mistake. Sri Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, counsels Arjuna to concentrate on *nasikagram*. The word, *agram*, has several and somewhat ambiguous meanings: “before, first, front.” *Nasikagram* means, “at the (*agram*) of the nose.” Many scholars have taken this word to mean, “at the *tip* of the nose.” My param-guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, said to his disciple Yogananda, “The yoga practices are strange enough without causing people to become cross-eyed!” The Bhagavad Gita, he explained, counsels concentration at the point between the eyebrows, behind which, in the brain, is seated the superconscious.

A certain spiritual teacher once tried to tell me Sri Yukteswar was wrong in saying that *agram* means the root of the nose. He said, “It means ‘front.’ Is the front of the nose at its root, or at its tip?” He went on to ask me—as Indians tend to do when arguing a point —“Is this—is this—is this (fingers, penis, toes) the front of this body part, or its root?” Well, I don’t know Sanskrit, but I have full faith in the wisdom of my Gurus. It made sense to me, also, that “front,” in any language, might easily mean also “first,” or “beginning,”

which could mean also “root.” So I checked a Sanskrit dictionary, and found there that *agram* does indeed have these additional meanings. I confronted that teacher with my findings, and he conceded that the word could also be understood that way. And then I asked myself, Why had this man tried to make me doubt my own Gurus by insisting they were wrong, and by presenting me with information I wasn’t qualified to discuss? I have not met, and never would bother to meet that teacher ever again!

*Nasikagram* means “the root of the nose.” I’ve explained, very carefully, the reason for our concentrating there.

1-37 | Otherwise also, by attunement with the mind of an enlightened being, one who is completely free from all attachment to the senses.

There is a saying in the ancient scriptures: “Even a moment in the company of a true saint will be your raft across the ocean of delusion.”

In the presence of an enlightened being, don’t be concerned with his outer personality. Try to tune in to his inner vibrations and consciousness.

At the beginning of the Gospel of St. John we read, “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”

My own guru emphasized constantly to us, his disciples, the importance of attunement with the guru. An important line in his great poem, “Samadhi,” reads, “By deeper, longer, thirstier, guru-given meditation comes this celestial samadhi.” Strangely, his editor, in a later edition of his autobiography, omitted this line. When I challenged her on the point, she gave me some excuse about difficulties with typesetting. I returned that line, and several others, to the edition put out by Crystal Clarity Publishers. This is a reprint of the first edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

A certain well-known saint in India once tried to get me to become his disciple. He insisted, “Your guru himself told you, ‘I am not your guru.’” Yogananda insisted to us, in fact, that God alone was the guru. None of us can act except as instruments. If we behave wickedly, we open ourselves to become instruments of

Satan. If we behave kindly and generously toward others, we become instruments of divine grace. A true guru has gone far beyond ego-consciousness. As my Guru used to say, "I killed Yogananda long ago [lifetimes ago, in fact]. No one dwells in this temple now but God." That saint's desire to have me for a disciple demonstrated his own strong ego-consciousness.

The most important thing on the spiritual path is to have a true guru. If you haven't met him yet, then, first, "shop the length of the counter," checking out spiritual teachers until you find one who feels right to you. This is finally, however, a matter decided by God. It is God who sends you your guru; and it is God who sends you to your guru. I myself was fortunate enough to meet my guru the first try, but the whole matter is decided by the disciple's readiness. I was, perhaps, over-ripe, but when the desire for God becomes intense, the guru appears though you be a shepherd living on some remote Alp.

To attune yourself to the guru's consciousness, concentrate on his eyes, especially, between the eyebrows, on your guru's eyes; call to him deeply, "Introduce me to God"; then listen for his answer, or try to feel his presence in your heart.

It is by *his* power alone that you will be able to rise above ego-consciousness. Man cannot lift himself out of that mire by his own power, because the consciousness with which he tries to do so is already infected with the disease of ego. My Guru, to illustrate this point, told me an example from the ancient scriptures of a man who was being disturbed by a demon. He had read that if one chants a certain *mantra* over a handful of powder, then casts it on the demon, the demon will vanish. He tried this method, and the demon only laughed at him. "Before you could even say your mantra, I myself entered that powder. How, then, could it affect me?" The ego is the demon. No amount of rituals, no amount of study of the scriptures, no amount of personal effort can free us from this disease of egoism. Only by attunement with one who has completely conquered his own ego can we absorb soul-freedom into ourselves.

That is why Swami Shankara, the *adi* or first, said that there is no blessing in all the three worlds comparable to that of a true guru.

What are the signs of such a guru? Well, for one thing, he has not the slightest desire for disciples. Too many of the saints one

meets may be saintly, but not to this extent. During their discourses one can still see ego sticking out like burrs on all sides.

## **1-38 | Otherwise, (calmness comes) also by concentration on some insight achieved during dreams or deep sleep.**

Obviously, Patanjali is not offering these alternatives in a mounting sequence of importance. Dreams and visions can indeed give us important help and guidance, and can even resolve serious difficulties in our lives. But in no way can they serve as substitutes, for example, for a true guru.

How can one know whether he has had a true dream? Obviously, most dreams are simply a jumble of emotions, memories, and personal impressions. They are not to be taken seriously. A true dream, however, will have a certain clarity. It will be accompanied by calmness, not by waves of emotion. Rather, one's attitude throughout the dream will be not only calm, but also calmly objective.

I remember one such dream I had many years ago. I and everyone I knew lived in a torture chamber. None of us had ever known a different way of life. One simply awoke, was tortured, then went to sleep, preparing for another day of torturing. There were bad days, of course, but also good days, when one was tortured rather less than usual.

After some time, a small group of us managed to communicate with one another, and shared our doubt that maybe there was a better way of living. We rose up, one day, slew the torturers, and escaped. To our surprise, the torture chamber turned out to be only one room on the top floor of a tall building. The rest of the building was empty! (From this fact, I later understood that our "torturers" exist only in the mind.) As we came out of the building, we saw empty land stretching in all directions to the horizon. Then we looked up, and to our amazement saw the same torturers calmly going about their business of torturing people.

Someone said to me, "How can that be?"

"I understand!" I exclaimed. "It's ourselves we have conquered, not the torturers!" And then I awoke.

The meaning of this dream has to be so clear to any reader of this book that I see no point in explaining it further. But I can add that this dream gave me a great sense of calmness, freedom, and understanding.

### **1-39 | Otherwise, also, by meditating on anything one finds elevating to his consciousness.**

The main point here is to surround yourself with things that inspire you. For example, people who can afford to do so like to surround themselves with expensive art—not because it inspires, but because it is expensive and they can boast of their acquisitions later, to others. Paintings by Pablo Picasso, for example, often depict schizophrenia, but many people covet them because they are expensive, and Picasso was famous.

One's criteria of everything should be: "Does it inspire me?" and, "Does it inspire me to think more deeply about divine qualities such as selfless love, wisdom, love of truth, and bliss?"

Even pretty pictures of flowers and mountains, though pleasing to look at, may induce in us the thought, "This is a wonderful world to live in." If so, such pictures are less spiritually helpful, even if they are restful to the eyes and the mind.

It is difficult to suggest really inspiring paintings, however. It is nice to have *something* on one's walls. Pictures of Christ suffering on the cross may be more appropriate in a church than in one's own living room. In fact, I could—and am tempted to—go on at great length on this subject, for (being artistically inclined) the whole subject deeply interests me. But I think the main point has been made well enough. Don't keep anything around you that is depressing to your feelings; don't keep anything that suggests sensuality, drunkenness, or sensual involvement; don't keep anything that depicts or reminds you of harmful emotions or attitudes—paintings of angry people, for example, no matter how skillfully done. And surround yourself by harmonious colors, sounds, and—most important of all—thoughts and feelings.

In public places nowadays, it is very sad how often one is compelled to listen to cacophony: depressing or nervous melodies,

jagged rhythms, distorted harmonies. Often I bless the fact that I am hard of hearing! But I suggest requesting the management to play music that is more uplifting. Music, of all art forms, has the most powerful effect on the nervous system.

Some music is actually satanic in its influence. I once read a book by a woman (I've forgotten her name) who had tried to commit suicide. Her account doesn't correspond to most—perhaps not to any—reports of near death experiences that I've read, but I can present it essentially as she told it.

In her account, she found herself in a sort of twilight zone where people were only dimly conscious. Time, for them, had ceased to exist. There were people in that realm dressed in the costumes of ancient Greece; of eighteenth century France; and of other times long past; they were barely conscious of their existence there. What was most notable to her was the dark vibration in that region. It corresponded, she said, to the vibrations of heavy-metal rock music. She was saved by a light that penetrated into that region, and I don't know by what saving methods here on earth. But since then she has toured America, warning people against the insidious influence of music with a heavy beat.

Her warning against that kind of music is valid. I believe her completely. Can any of my readers even *imagine* anyone smiling serenely under the influence of such pounding music? If he can, he must be stone deaf!

Be very careful especially of the kind of music to which you willingly subject yourself! There was a song in the mid-1920s called "Gloomy Sunday." It was made popular by the singer Billie Holliday. It had to be banned from the radio because too many people, susceptible to depression, committed suicide after listening to it.

I myself have written over four hundred songs and instrumental works, the entire purpose of which is to offer people sounds that would be spiritually uplifting for them. Too little, even of classical music, makes any attempt to uplift.

1-40 | Gradually, one's mastery of concentration extends from the smallest reality to the largest.

My Guru wrote, in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, that every atom is “dowered with individuality.” A simply amazing statement! It means that, though we are all of us expressions of God, each one of us is in some way unique. As I like to put it, “God has a special song to sing through each and every one of us.”

Our uniqueness begins at the level of the atom. Darwin had it almost ridiculously wrong! He gave us an acceptable (though not necessarily correct) explanation of the mechanics of evolution, but he didn’t realize that everything, being a manifestation of the Infinite, is conscious. Consciousness exists even in the rocks (though I wouldn’t try to challenge a stone to a game of chess!). J.C. Bose, a scientist in India at the beginning of the twentieth century, showed that even metal responds to stimuli. And it has been found that tools used in factories tire with overuse; it is well to give them a rest, occasionally. Even the atoms, then, contain at least the germ of consciousness. And evolution is best explained as a reaching upward at every point in existence toward an ever-greater awareness. Each one of us, from our most pristine beginnings countless eons ago, has been unique. Even when we—who knows how far away in future time?—merge back into oneness with God and become, in effect, God Himself, we shall retain our uniqueness in the form of memory, which is a part of God and is eternal.

Therefore Patanjali, later on, describes enlightenment as *smriti*, memory. We remember, when we become enlightened, that our true home has always been in Spirit.

To find God means to become one with everything, from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy. In that state, indeed, both time and space are cognized as delusions. Consider this mind-bending thought: The farthest planet in the most distant galaxy is really no farther away from you than your own hand!

1-41 | Just as a pure crystal (or unflawed mirror) reflects the true shape and color of objects that are placed before it, so the yogi’s mind, upon the neutralization of his vortices of emotion (in the heart), attains complete inner balance. He then realizes knowing, knower, known as one.

When the act of knowing, the knower (man), and Known (God) become one: This state is known as samadhi.

To attain this state, one must eliminate all desires and expectations. One must have no wishes regarding how he is treated. Should he be condemned to die burning at the stake, he should be indifferent to this fate, which is to say, he should accept it with equanimity.

One achieves perfect balance on a tightwire when he is able to walk on it calmly without tilting even slightly to either left or right. In this realm of duality, vibration rules supreme. Vibration is movement in opposite directions from a point of rest in the middle. When one ceases to be pulled by life in either direction; when he is affected by neither emotional joy nor sorrow; pleasure nor pain; gleeful acceptance nor grim rejection; smiling happiness nor tearful suffering—when none of these states affect one in the slightest, one's mind becomes a flawless mirror to everything as it is.

Scientists try to achieve this objective state, but to do so they try to suppress their feelings. One's feelings may be suppressed, but they cannot be destroyed. In one way or another they will surface—perhaps distorted, often unnoticed, but nevertheless still active and even potent. An archeologist will move a discovered object to another level to match his preconceived ideas. A new discovery will meet with denial among “orthodox” scientists. A new way of explaining things will be fiercely opposed by scientists who are emotionally “addicted” to the old ways. Max Planck, the famous—I refuse to call him “great”; he was an ordinary human being with a good mind—German physicist, stated that a new scientific discovery gains acceptance not because it is reasonable, but because an old generation dies and a new generation grows up accustomed to this new knowledge.

Scientists can, in fact, be as dogmatic as any religious preacher. To know the truth, one must first know himself. This is the eternal validity of that ancient Greek saying: “*Gnothi sauton*: Know thyself.” Those alone who have achieved true spiritual insight are competent to know the full truth about *any* subject.

When the vrittis become stilled, and there are no more vortices of feeling in heart or spine to obstruct the free upward flow of Kundalini to the brain, then alone can one look without prejudice on the world, and understand it to its essence: as a vibrational manifestation of pure consciousness.



## 1-42 | In the first stage of samadhi, name, form, and particular awareness are commingled (with the consciousness of Infinity).

I have translated this sutra as best I can. Every book at my disposal on the subject makes such a hash of the meaning that I am obliged to give you the essence as it was explained to me by my Guru.

In the first stage of samadhi, which, as I said earlier, my Guru called *sabikalpa*, the ego is alive, though dormant. Yogananda defined ego as “the soul attached to the body.” Thus, where there is ego there must also be some body-attachment. And with body-attachment there is still awareness of the identity and shape of things in this world: an awareness of them as separate realities.

Commingling, here, implies not *muddle*, but rather an awareness of two realities at once: the consciousness of Infinity, and a lingering awareness of sensory delusion. To retain that state of samadhi, one must rise above ego-consciousness altogether, which means also becoming totally indifferent to all sensory experiences.

[Note for aphorism 1-43]

A compendium (so as to avoid identification) of several translations of the next sutra, 1-43, might read: “Non-argumentative is when the memory is cleansed, and the object alone shines without deliberation. This is samadhi without deliberation.” If any reader can make sense of these words, he is a better man than I am. Obviously, to know Sanskrit is not enough. To understand Patanjali, one must be more than a scholar. Intellectuals whose understanding comes to them only through books cannot hope to penetrate the pithy statements of truth that are offered by Patanjali.

I have a simple mind. In order to understand a thing, I need to see it simply and clearly. Fortunately, my Guru was a master of clarity. What he explained to me of the ancient teachings made, and still makes, perfect sense to me. Far too much of what I have read, apart from Yogananda (and from Sri Ramakrishna), makes no sense to me at all.

So let me offer here a new, and (I think) improved version of this sutra, based on what I learned at the feet of my Guru.

1-43 | When one's consciousness has freed itself of all self-identity, the true Self shines forth in all its purity and brilliance, beyond any reasoned definitions. This is (the second) *nivritarka* (or *nirbikalpa*) *samadhi*.

It is natural for human beings to think of their ego as their true self. God's view of everything is from the inside, out; man's is from the outside, in. Man's understanding of himself rests on outward self-identity: I am a man; I am an American; I am by nature an artist; I like onions; I hate garlic; I like restless music; I hate music that is too calm; I am naturally serious, but I like an occasional good joke—and so on, and on and on.

God's way of acting is outward, from the center. Man, on the contrary, works inward from what he sees. He carves statues of people. God creates (manifests would be a better word) people from tiny cells. God is center everywhere, circumference nowhere. Man, on the contrary, is circumference everywhere, center nowhere.

Because of man's complete misapprehension as to the reality of his true nature, he lives in equally complete delusion as to the nature of reality itself. Only when he has freed himself from all self-identity can he realize who he truly is: not a separate, limiting physical body, but the Infinite Self of all that exists. That Self is shining, for behind dull matter is the brilliance of pure energy. One's understanding, then, depends not on reasoning, for it *knows*; it does not need to *infer* anything. To be knowledgeable is not necessarily to be wise.

1-44 | Thus has been explained the difference between *sabichara* (*sabikalpa*) and *nirbichara* (*nirbikalpa*) *samadhi*.

This stanza requires no explanation.

1-45 | (In *nirbikalpa samadhi*) the subtlest

## perceptions become indistinguishable from one another.

This is to say, when one has achieved oneness with the Infinite, all is perceived as part of that great oneness.

1-46 | These (two) samadhis are (even so) still seeded.

In the first, *sabikalpa samadhi*, there remains still the seed of ego-consciousness. Thus, it is possible to fall from that state. Indeed, *sabikalpa* constitutes the last, and perhaps greatest, temptation. Experiencing it, the ego may feel, having contacted the vastness of pure awareness, that it has become supremely knowledgeable and all-powerful. Any thought of ego, however, brings the yogi down again from that high state, into delusion. One common mistake the devotee may make, after achieving that state, is to think he knows more than his spiritually awakened guru. Thus, he may wander again for many more incarnations.

In *nirbikalpa* one has destroyed forever the seed of ego-consciousness. There still remains, however, the memory of past-life ego involvements. It is not that he can ever again fall from his high state; he can't. But he must still go through all his past lives—the memory, for example, of himself as a pirate; as a merchant; as a pianist; as a loving mother—and realize that, in each one of those lives, it was really God Himself who played every role.

For everything is God. He created nothing apart from Himself. Indeed, that is one thing even God could not do, for in all existence there is only Reality. Even Satan is really only an instrument of God.

In *nirbikalpa samadhi*, one has vanquished his immediate ego, but there remains still in his subconscious the memory of his past delusion. Before he can merge fully in God in the state of *moksha*, or full liberation, he must free his consciousness of even the subtlest identity with all those past lives.

I once asked my Guru, “If, in *nirbikalpa*, one realizes already his oneness with God, why can't he just say, ‘I'm free!’, and *be free*?” He answered, “One can, but in that state of freedom you don't care.

You may keep coming back for the sake of your disciples.”

The safest answer to all this tortuous and tortured reasoning is to point out that no one, among the vast horde of people who, through the ages, have found God, has ever cried, “What a scam!” All who have found Him have cried, rather, “It was worth everything I ever went through!”

How many past lives have we wandered? The Bhagavad Gita declares that, with a new Day of Brahma (when Creation is brought into outward manifestation once again), God casts out yet again all those souls who have not yet attained spiritual freedom.

And the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* states—reconditely, but in this way my Guru explained this obscure passage—that many of those souls who appeared at the first manifestation of the present Day of Brahma are still wandering in delusion at the end of it.

The length of time we have all been wandering is almost frightening, at least to the reasoning mind. The scriptures declare that it takes between eight and twelve million incarnations for life to evolve up to the human state. Upon reaching this relatively high state, the ego becomes fully defined, and with that obstacle now defined one may wander uncoun­ted millions of lives more, before reaching the level of freedom I’ve described. How long? That depends on us. For with the ego clearly formed, we also have the free will to move upward or downward.

Does all this seem cruel on God’s part? Reflect on a very simple truth: We wouldn’t keep on wandering, if we didn’t want to! Krishna declares in the Bhagavad Gita: “Get away from My ocean of suffering and misery!” The trouble is that in this world of duality, suffering and misery are equally balanced by pleasure and happiness! And so it is that people go bouncing on, forever hoping—and forever disillusioned! But they needn’t do so, if they would only turn to God!

One naturally asks the question: Why does God bring everything into manifestation in the first place? *Adi* (the first) Swami Shankara defined the Supreme Spirit as Satchidananda: “Ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss.” (It was my Guru who added that phrase, “ever-new,” to this definition.) According to my understanding—my Guru, that is to say, never specified this thought to me—the answer to that eternal question, Why?, is that the nature of ever-newness is not only that it is forever newly enjoyable, but also that it manifests Itself forever anew.

According to the scriptures, God wanted to enjoy Himself through many. For people who are in the midst of suffering, those words may awaken the thought, “Then God must be a sadist!” But this is simply another twist of delusion’s work on the disordered mind. It is not the thinking of anyone who has achieved wisdom. God enjoys Himself, not through people’s suffering, but through the way they finally work their way through the maze and discover the bliss of their own nature. It is like a novel. If the story begins with joy and success everywhere, I think everyone would put the book down after only a few pages. But if the leading character has to struggle to find that joy and success, and at last attains it, people might well say, “What a great read!”

Indeed, though we live countless lives—on earth, and on many other planets—not only do we consider it worthwhile (as long as we keep wandering), but in all that time, time simply doesn’t exist! Both space and time are only delusions.

But these things, really, are beyond human reasoning. I myself used to seek truth through reasoning, and my reason (fortunately) led me to the realization that the goal of human life is to seek God. It is better to seek Him in simplicity of heart, with devotion. As Jesus Christ put it, “Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God.” God, who created this vast, complex universe, began it and conducts it from the simplicity of an awareness that is center everywhere, circumference nowhere. He has no expectations of anything, no regrets for what has passed: He lives eternally in the eternal Now, and at the eternal Present!

## 1-47 | In the purity of *nirbichara* samadhi, the Supreme Self shines.

That state, being completely pure, makes it impossible ever to fall again. This is the case because all attachment to the ego has been destroyed.

## 1-48 | In this state (one attains) Absolute Consciousness.

Einstein related all movement to the speed of light. Modern so-called “deep” thinkers, who declare that everything, being relative, is therefore meaningless, overlook that relativity signifies relativity to *something*. That “something” is Absolute Consciousness! All other joys, all other fulfillments are incomplete, and are relative to the Absolute Bliss of our own true being.

1-49 | This high truth is completely different from any knowledge or awareness gained by hearing about it, studying about it in scripture, or coming to it by a process of reasoning.

The meaning of this sutra is self-evident.

1-50 | The awareness, “I am free!”, which comes with this highest samadhi, eliminates all other impressions.

1-51 | When even this thought, I am free!, is eliminated, the soul attains seedless samadhi (*moksha*, or complete liberation).

Thus was it possible for the great woman saint, Anandamayee Ma, to declare: “God is and He isn’t, and neither is He nor is He not!”

*End of First Book, or Pada*

## Footnote

\* “My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet.” *Autobiography of a Yogi*, chapter 14: “An Experience in Cosmic Consciousness.”

# Sadhana Pada

## THE SECOND BOOK

### *The Way to Samadhi*

2-1 | Accepting pain as purification; study of the scriptures and introspection; openness to the divine will and guidance, and acceptance of them: these constitute the practice of yoga.

It is important to understand that the yoga postures, or *asanas*, while excellent in themselves, are not truly the practice of yoga. The word, yoga, means union. Its practice consists of ways to attain divine union. For Westerners who think of yoga as a system of foreign practices, I should emphasize that virtually everything Patanjali taught, especially in this second book, is true for everyone, and is valid for all truth seekers. Patanjali showed no interest in mere belief systems. *Everyone* who is seeking union with God, whether he be Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, orthodox Hindu, Buddhist, or Hottentot, must go through certain stages in that search, just as everyone who is not in the hospital or physically handicapped must eat food through his mouth.

Ardent aficionados of Hatha Yoga often dwell on its physical benefits. The “this-will-slim-your-hips, girls” approach to yoga, however, is a travesty. The merits of Hatha Yoga are indeed many and great. Practicing it may also inspire a few physical culturists, in time, to take yoga itself more seriously. Apart from that possibility, however, Hatha Yoga may be ranked with gymnastics.

I was teaching Hatha Yoga many years ago, along with meditation, to earn the money I needed for creating the first



Ananda community. A lady to whom I had taught Hatha Yoga a few months before enrolled in my next course on meditation. As she signed in, she remarked to me, “I took those classes at first only to have something to talk about with members of my bridge club. But you know, this stuff is *serious*! Now I really want to delve into the subject more deeply!”

Yes, yoga is serious. It cuts close to the very center of all your aspirations in life.

Pain and suffering are a part of everyone’s life. The fact that they have normally been experienced by saints and seekers all over the world may be scoffed at by yoga enthusiasts. “Yoga,” they may insist, “should prevent you from having to endure pain.” Certainly it is true that Hatha Yoga is a cure for many ailments. However, there is also the question of karma. If you caused people to suffer in one or more past lives, then no amount of yoga practice will release you from the law of karma which dictates that you must go through similar sufferings in this, or in future lives.

One may ask, will Adolf Hitler have to suffer for every single Jew he caused to be killed in a concentration camp? The answer is, No, not for every one. He was the head of his country. He acted on behalf of Germany as a whole; Germany itself, therefore, will have to bear the greater part of that karma. I might say that, when I visit Germany today, I feel a karmic cloud over that country. I felt one over Cambodia when I visited there in 1958. The one over Germany is not so dense, but it is palpable.

Of Joseph Stalin, Yogananda said, “Hitler was a boy scout compared to him. Stalin will have to suffer personally for what he did in that life; indeed, suffering will pursue him for another hundred thousand years.” Even at that, a hundred thousand years aren’t very many compared to the soul’s eons-long pilgrimage to perfection. Nor is it very much compared to the sufferings Stalin inflicted on his fellowman. Nevertheless, Russia itself, and not Stalin alone, will have to bear most of that burden. My Guru said, of the future: “Europe will be devastated; Russia will be annihilated.” Mass karma is definitely a reality.

Pain is a universal experience for all mankind. For some, the pain is intense; for others it is relatively minor. The pains we endure are a karmic balance for pains we have inflicted on others. Pain in itself, however, doesn’t bring much spiritual freedom. The important thing is to accept it calmly and willingly—even joyfully.

We should see it as God's will for us, and as an expression of His love. When we can accept equably whatever suffering comes to us, we shall remove ourselves from the sphere of pain altogether. Remember these words of my Guru: Circumstances are always neutral. They seem either good or bad, happy or sad, depending entirely on our *reaction* to them.

*Swadhyaya*, the next item on the list of necessary yoga practices, is usually translated to mean "studying the scriptures. *Swa*, however, means *self*. Introspection, then, is the true meaning of this word. One may study the scriptures "until the cows come home," but if he doesn't live according to their teachings he might as well be reading a magazine! What he reads in the scriptures he should apply to his own life, by deep introspection.

Consider these lessons in self-study: If someone insults you, why insult him in return? Why take that karma onto your own shoulders? Instead, introspect first to see whether in some way you may have merited that insult.

Again, if someone tries to hurt you, ask yourself what you might have done to attract his ill will.

The first thing is to watch your own *reactions*. If your reactions to life are right, everything will flow smoothly. You will not obtrude your ego onto everything, thereby distorting your perception of reality.

The first and most important thing on the spiritual path is to overcome all attachment to ego. If someone slights you publicly, then, be grateful in your heart for his reminder that you are not important in the great scheme of things and that your real task, as a child of God, is to minimize your importance in everything. It is of the most vital importance to your own spiritual progress, and to your own lasting happiness, to get out of the cage of ego-consciousness altogether.

If people get angry with you, then, ask yourself first whether you yourself are at fault. In any case, always remain inwardly calm.

A rule I have made, and kept, in my life has been never to let anything upset my own peace of mind.

For all my childhood, I used to suffer seasickness when we went out to sea. Since it was my lot to have to cross the Atlantic Ocean many times, I was often seasick.

Years after reaching adulthood, I spent a night on Green Island, on the Great Barrier Reef off eastern Australia. The following

evening I was scheduled to lecture on the mainland, in the city of Cairns. Unfortunately, that morning the sea was unusually rough. I thought, “Since I must lecture in Cairns this evening, I simply can’t come there ‘green about the gills.’” I therefore resolved firmly to *enjoy* every wild gyration the ship made. Every time it tossed me up and down, left and right, and went through a wild variety of corkscrew motions, I mentally met every upheaval with the firm affirmation, “Yes!” The results were, to me, amazing. Though I arrived in port somewhat shaken, I felt no seasickness. Moreover, since then I have never felt the least touch of seasickness, however many times I have been at sea.

It is important for us to accept pain of any kind even-mindedly. That, in fact, is the best way to overcome it.

So remember, yoga doesn’t free us from our karma: it frees us from susceptibility to whatever suffering karma might otherwise cause us. Karma doesn’t oblige us to suffer. It merely obliges us to experience the ups and downs we caused others to go through in the past.

What, then, is the final practice listed in this sutra? What does it mean to accept the divine will willingly? Since karma is God’s law, we must always be open to it, accept its intricate play willingly—and remain ever even-minded throughout. There are, of course, many kinds of karma—good, bad, and indifferent. We should identify ourselves with none of them, accept with an even mind whatever comes to us in life, and not allow ourselves to become excited over anything.

## 2-2 | In these ways, our obstacles become minimized.

We should try always to be aware that, in our souls, we are ever perfect. It is we ourselves who created the obstacles to the awareness of that truth. Well, that isn’t quite fair! Yes, it was God who created this delusion of separateness in the first place. Still, our sins or bad karma, and even *any* karma that we knotted to ourselves with the thought of our separate reality—all these actions, taking place as they do in a realm of duality, must have their opposite reactions.

A freed soul, or *jivan mukta*, no longer acts with any thought that he is acting for himself. He has risen above ego-consciousness.

Thus, though his actions have consequences, these results are not tied to himself. They affect others—and always beneficially, for in that state one desires only the general good—but those karmas do not return to the doer.

The Bhagavad Gita makes the important point that one cannot get out of karma simply by not acting. One who lives in a body is forced to act even by the fact that he must breathe! Those who try not to create more karma by simply not acting become dullards! We cannot but act. It is very necessary, therefore, that we act *energetically* for the good. Yogananda said, “You have to be very active for God, to attain that actionless state.”

The best way to get out of ego is to serve others with love and sensitive attention to their needs.

## 2-3 | There are five obstacles: ignorance, egoism, attachments, aversions, and clinging to bodily life.

Ignorance, in the spiritual sense, has nothing to do with lack of book learning or intellectual knowledge. It means lack of awareness as to who you really are, in your soul. But we shall go into this subject more deeply with the next sutra, so let me take it no deeper here.

Egoism, too, I have covered extensively, before.

Attachments and aversions are major obstacles on the spiritual path. They bind us to the ego. “I like (this, that, and the other thing, place, situation, or person)! I don’t like. . . .”

We must begin with the way we view other people. Why? Because it is others, primarily, who affect our emotions. Remember, yoga is above all a matter of calming the feelings. These, when ruffled, create waves in our consciousness—waves that cause us to feel separate from the ocean of pure consciousness which is the Supreme Spirit. In reality, there is only that one Ocean. But our feelings create in us the delusion of separateness. The ego, moreover, causes that surface movement to whirl our feelings in vortices around our egos. Here, however, the image of the wave is apposite, for it helps the mind to visualize movement in opposite directions from a point of rest at the center. When we allow

ourselves to become involved with others emotionally, we set up criteria in our minds that make us attached to certain persons, and make us dislike others who fail to meet our personal criteria.

People arouse these attachments and aversions in us much more powerfully than, say, food or scenery. Nevertheless, of course, we should accept calmly whatever is.

This practice is particularly important, certainly, when it comes to anything that affects us, especially: pain and pleasure, for example; pleasant and unpleasant experiences; and any experience that affects our bodies or our minds. Sickness, usually, causes some mental suffering. Learn to accept with an even mind whatever comes into your life, by giving it to God.

I have long made it a practice never to pray for myself, and never to defend myself. Why should I ask for anything different from what God gives me? I don't say, "Never pray for yourself." But I do say, the more you renounce this thought, "I," the happier you'll be. The pain I had felt that Sunday morning when I had a kidney stone attack was suddenly replaced by a joy so intense that I could hardly give the worship service anyway; though, through tears of joy, I did give it.

One or two years ago I dreamed that enemies of mine tried to burn me at the stake. I accepted what they were doing, and thought, "The pain will only last a little while." As can happen in dreams, they then sat down at a banquet table nearby, and, with laughter and much rejoicing, toasted one another and enjoyed a grand feast. I didn't resent their doing so.

At that point, friends of mine came and released me, thereby saving my life. I was as indifferent to the fact that I'd been saved as I had been to being tortured at the stake. I was grateful, when I awakened, to find that even in my dreams I had been able to remain even-minded under what would be, for anyone, an extreme ordeal.

Learn, then, to be even-minded under all circumstances. When good fortune comes, accept it—I won't say indifferently, but with a calm, grateful thought to God. And when ill fortune swoops down upon you, accept it, again, with a calm, grateful thought to God, as something that has come from Him. In this way, whatever experience comes to you will only increase your inner joy.

As for the last of these obstacles, attachment to the physical body, it is, of course, an all-but-universal delusion, but it is also a

universally recognized fact that we cannot live forever. Indeed, the reason people reject physical death is that they know, in their souls, that their actual demise is an impossibility: they most certainly will live forever. They are confused, however, because their minds confuse life with their physical bodies.

It would help everybody, whether God-seeker or atheist, to prepare for the inevitable fact that he must eventually leave this physical body. He should tell himself daily, “I am not this body; I am not attached to it!” Can an atheist repeat these words with any sort of conviction? Well, perhaps not, but perhaps he can accept that the life in his body will continue in some other form—perhaps only in daisies growing over his grave. If he can persuade himself to dwell consciously on that simple thought that he is a part of life itself, even if his own human life must cease, surely it can be more comforting to him than the thought, “At death, I will cease to exist.” In this thought, indeed, he may succeed to some extent, at least, in banishing the fear of an approaching fact that simply cannot be avoided.

But of course, I am being fanciful. Atheists won’t even face the thought of death: it frightens them. Only when it comes will they experience, after death, a wonderful release they never even imagined. I had such an experience with my earthly father. He was a scientist, and not inclined to believe in, or even to think about, his own death. I doubt that the thought of God ever interested his mind. When he died, I felt his presence very clearly for a few moments. It was full of joy and enthusiasm. He had his youth again, as I’d known it in my childhood.

Our beliefs are not really very important, except as hypotheses by which to direct our actions here on earth. Beliefs are the criterion of virtue in most religions. They are helpful, but they are also cages. As Swami Vivekananda put it, “It is no doubt a blessing to be born into a religion, but it is a misfortune to die in one.”

## **2-4 | Ignorance is the field on which all imperfections thrive, whether dormant, superficial, sporadic, or sustained.**

Dormant imperfections are those which are latent within us, but

which have not sprouted in the present life, and may even—because present circumstances do not favor their sprouting—remain dormant in the subconscious for the whole of this lifetime.

Imagine someone who once had a passion for some kind of food that is not available in our times. Or who loved deep-sea fishing and is now born inland on a desert and is obliged to remain there. If one wanted to put his mind to it, he could probably think up thousands of similar examples.

Even we, as babies, had many qualities that we'd developed before that we could not yet express in this life.

Superficial imperfections are those which are not serious impediments on the spiritual path. For instance, during the early years of my discipleship to my Guru I asked him to help me overcome attachment to good food. He replied, "Oh, don't bother about those little things! When ecstasy comes, everything goes."

Sporadic imperfections are those which appear in the mind intermittently: an occasional impulse, for example, to go downtown and have a good time. This sort of imperfection is an obstacle, of course, but much less so than a deep-seated, permanent pull on the mind. If you deny yourself the fulfillment of these impulses, they will gradually vanish from your mind.

Sustained imperfections—the longing, for example, for a romantic relationship, or for children of one's own; qualities, in other words, that are perfectly normal for worldly people, but obstacles for anyone who is seeking God—can be removed by the guru's or by God's grace, but usually have to be indulged until experience itself teaches one that, outside of God, there is simply no fulfillment.

**2-5 | Ignorance is the conviction that what is impermanent is permanent; that what is impure is pure; that what is painful is pleasant; and that what is the non-Self (the ego) is the true self.**

We see decay all around us: living creatures dying; buildings crumbling; unused roads disappearing. It has been estimated that, were our civilization to be destroyed, almost all signs of its having

ever existed would vanish in a few thousand years. Matter, Isaac Newton declared, can neither be created nor destroyed. Since the explosion of the first atom bomb, however, mankind has realized that matter *can* be transformed—into energy: that matter *is*, in fact, only energy in a low state of vibration. In time, science may find (as God-realized masters know already) that energy is but thoughts in a state of vibration, and that thoughts themselves are only vibrations of divine consciousness. Nothing in Creation is permanent. At the end of a Day of Brahma there follows a Night of Brahma, when the manifested is retired into latent memory, and souls that have not yet achieved enlightenment are withdrawn into a state of semi-consciousness.

The only reality in existence—fixed forever, and beyond forever—where neither space nor time exists, is Brahman, the Supreme Spirit.

For a thing to be pure, it must be in its natural state. *Nothing* can be in its pristine state that is only a manifestation of Spirit. In this sense, then, only the Supreme Spirit itself may be considered really pure! Anything in Creation, however, that suggests upward movement toward divine enlightenment, or (better still) that inspires movement in that direction, may be considered pure. Otherwise, indeed, we cannot rightly take anything into consideration at all!

That is impure which draws the mind downward in the spine, toward sensuality and worldliness. The reason for its impurity is that it removes our consciousness from the thought of God. Worldly people may call a romantic movie “pure” because it displays passion only as a kiss. But passion itself is impure! Anything that excites waves of emotion in the heart is impure, for the simple reason that it prevents that calm state of consciousness in which alone right understanding can reign.

How can anyone enjoy pain? Well, sadists enjoy inflicting it on others. So do bullies. But is that really *enjoyment*? Consider the case of more normal people. The pleasures they find in this world are often painful to their own higher nature. They enjoy venting their anger on others, even if, inwardly, they dislike having felt that emotion. They enjoy their bad habits, even though they wish they didn’t have them. Even to scratch a mosquito bite gives pleasure at the same time as hurting us!

And we have already discussed the problem man has in



overcoming the thought that his ego is not his true Self.

## **2-6 | Egoism is the identification of that which sees (the organ of sight) with the power of seeing.**

Identification with the body deludes a person into thinking that, without eyes, he couldn't see. Of course, physically speaking, that which I have called a delusion is plain fact: he could not see! Nor could he hear without ears; smell without olfactory glands; taste without taste buds; feel without the sense of touch. But he came into this world from a subtler level of existence. In the astral world, into which we are released again at death, we have, in our astral bodies, the *power* of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. In that world, those who were blind and deaf in this world can see and hear perfectly.

It is a delusion, therefore, to depend wholly on your outward senses. Remember, in your inner Self you are as omnipotent as God, because, in that Self, you *are* God!

## **2-7 | Attachment is that which arises with pleasure.**

This statement is clear. Attachment to anything arises only when you take pleasure in it. The important thing, for a yogi, is to learn how to enjoy a thing impersonally, without attachment.

## **2-8 | Aversion is that which arises from pain.**

When you go to the dentist, for example, don't let your feelings cringe from the pain of having a tooth drilled. Be impersonal. Tell yourself, "This is happening, but not to *me*."

2-9 | Even the wise cling (however slightly) to this life, caught in the flow of satisfaction it has given them.

Even the wise experience some satisfaction in having a physical body, and cling to it mentally, however slightly, when the moment comes to leave it. This is not attachment, really, for they are happy to leave the body any time they are called. As a master may sigh inadvertently, however, at the misbehavior of a disciple, so an enlightened soul facing departure from his body may sigh, thinking, “So, you’re off again, are you?” He accepts the fact, and quickly adjusts to it.

2-10 | All these obstacles (attractions, aversions, etc.) can be removed by the perception of their first cause (the ego).

The ego is like the roots of a great tree. When the roots are killed, the tree dies. It is good to battle with one’s individual weaknesses. It is better, however, to fight those battles which are easier to win instead of struggling futilely against enemies that are too strong for one. Gradually, by fighting winnable battles, one gains the strength for fighting the harder ones. The supreme war, of course, is against the ego itself. Its destruction—or say, rather, its transformation—is, in all spiritual struggles, the main goal. And it can be fought all the way, nibbling at it, as it were, piece by piece, instead of conducting one massive campaign.

When people praise you, reply, “God is the Doer.” When they blame you, accept their blame calmly—and even, where possible, with a friendly smile. When people slight your importance before others, accept their slight with inner thanks. Instead of thinking what good may come to you, think, “What can I give?” Instead of glorying in any honors that are heaped on you, give all honor to others. Instead of worrying about what people think of you, concentrate on what you can share with them. Instead of waiting to extend the hand of welcome or friendship to others, be the first to show kindness and good will. Don’t worry, first, about how others

are toward you: be a true friend to them.

There may come a time, as it once came to me many years ago, when you can confront your ego with fierce rejection. I remember I was meditating, when suddenly the thought came to me: It is time to confront fiercely my satisfaction in having a clear intellect. I remember my exact words then: “I’m sick of you! I want nothing more to do with you! **GET OUT !!!**” I actually shouted them, as fiercely as I could!

Suddenly I felt a great inward sense of release. I saw my Guru very shortly after that meditation, and knelt for his blessing. “Very good!” he said. Since then, I have no longer felt a need to refer things back to myself. I feel as free as it is possible to feel while still encased in a physical body. And other obstacles as a result—desires, aversions, likes and dislikes—no longer seem real to me.

## **2-11 | In the active state, (those obstacles) can be destroyed by meditation.**

It was during meditation that I was able to drive that delusion out of my mind. Comparing the pleasant sensation of intellectual brilliance with the peacefulness of meditation, I saw that it was not only limiting to my consciousness, but perfectly ridiculous!

## **2-12 | Past karmas have their origin in the (aforementioned) obstacles, which are ego- involvements, and cause the events experienced in the present birth and in future births.**

There are two ancient writings in India, each of them about five thousand years old, that describe the lives of many people living on earth today. Their existence may, to many readers, seem an impossibility, and surely the product of chicanery of some sort. Five thousand years ago, however, the earth was passing through what is known as Treta Yuga, a period of time when man will pierce the

veil of delusion that is time. In the present *ascending* yuga, or age, the one known as Dwapara Yuga, the ancient teachings declared that man would see through the delusion of space. We are only just over one hundred years into this age, and already we are going to the moon, and placing exploratory equipment on Mars. This age will last a total of two thousand years, with an additional two hundred years of transition at either end.

Treta Yuga, which comes next, lasts three thousand years, with three hundred years of transition at either end. The entire cycle of yugas lasts 24,000 years: 12,000 ascending; 12,000 descending. Five thousand years ago the earth was in *descending* Treta Yuga.

I have had occasion to explore this phenomenon. Some of what the readings told me was nothing short of astounding.

This is not the place to explain those readings in detail. However, one of them said I was born in Romania (correct), and lived in America; that I would have brothers but no living sister was possible; that I would encounter severe tests in my mission.

We learn from scripture itself that man has free will, but how much free will has he, really? A male human being cannot give birth. Old men like me can no longer run the hundred yard dash. We are limited not only by our bodies, but by the natures and mental acuity with which we were born. In truth, we have only this much free will: We can determine which direction to take in life: toward God, or away from Him. Everything else is predetermined for us by our actions in the past. (And if you can prove me wrong, I'll be very happy to hear your proofs!)

2-13 | The existence of a cause necessitates the existence also of a result, which may bear fruit in (the bodies of) different species, and will decide their experiences (in those forms), and their longevity.

Is it really possible for a human being to become an animal again? Reflect, your human body doesn't define who you are. You are the formless soul. But if in a human body you live an animalistic life, you can certainly be reborn in your next life as an animal. The look in the eyes of some animals, certainly, certainly suggests an

almost-human awareness.

My Guru explained that, ordinarily, such a descent will be for only one lifetime. After that, you will be returned to a human body. If, moreover, you continue to live like an animal, you may return to an animal form again—but, once more, for only one lifetime. If you continue this way too long, however, it is possible at last to be thrown farther down the evolutionary scale, from where you will have to work your way upward once again to the human level.

How far downward can you descend? My Guru said, as low as the level of a germ! It will not be pleasant, certainly, to work your way up through the worm, through insect forms, then—painstakingly—through lower animal forms, all the while aware on some deep level of your being that your natural state is much higher than you are now!

I have often wondered about the future of wealthy financiers who, in their fever of monetary greed, ruthlessly destroy the incomes of others in order to become richer, themselves!

## 2-14 | The fruits of one's past actions bring pleasure or pain according to their quality (whether they are uplifting or degrading).

Good or bad karma is determined not by any social code of behavior, but only according to the simple criterion: Will it uplift your consciousness toward God, or draw it farther downward, away from the remembrance of Him. The deeds themselves are less important than the intentions behind those deeds. You may have given away fortunes in charity, but if you did it with the hope of impressing others, the outer benefits of that generosity will be balanced against the egoistic intentions. It is always good to do good, even for selfish reasons, but it is far better to do good in a spirit of genuine kindness.

## 2-15 | Indeed, to anyone of discrimination, everything

(experienced by the body) is painful, for every desire, once satisfied, is followed by fear of loss; it produces ever-new cravings in the mind; and desire results in conflict between the three gunas.

As I said earlier, Yogananda used to say, “Desires, ever fed, are never satisfied.”

Wise is he who looks for no pleasures in this world, for, ruled as everything is by the principle of duality, every pleasure must be offset by an equal and opposite pain. Why continue forever on this roller coaster ride?

The answer is not to possess nothing, but only be without attachment to whatever one possesses. A good method for breaking attachment to anything is to give away freely your most prized possessions, if anyone craves them. Another method is, every night before you go to bed, mentally to throw everything you own into a bonfire, and joyfully watch it burning to ashes. Go to bed with your heart completely free.

The puzzler in this sutra is this: How can cravings produce a conflict between the gunas?

All of us are products of a mixture of the three gunas. Creation itself, says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, is a product of the mixture of the three gunas. In modern English, we think of a “mixture” as being a variety—of foods, for instance, stirred up in a mixing bowl. To apply this word to the presence of the three gunas in the body is confusing. And how can our cravings create such a mixture? Worse still, how can they cause the gunas to be in conflict with one another?

My Guru explained their presence in Nature in terms of increasing distance from their pristine state in the Absolute. I have said this before, but perhaps it wouldn't hurt to explain it a little further again, here. A wave on the ocean may be said to consist of three parts: that which is closest to the ocean; that part in the middle which pushed upward; and the crest at the top. For purposes of illustration only, the part closest to the ocean may be described as sattwa guna, which, in man, is the most spiritual part of his nature. The middle part, the activating part, is called rajoguna, man's energetic, activating quality. And the crest is that part of the wave which is farthest from the ocean. In man, the crest is that part

of him which expresses tamoguna: sluggishness, for example.

My Guru explained that all three gunas are present, of necessity, in everyone. In a saint, for example, tamoguna, may be expressed only in his need for sleep at night. And in a tamasic person, sattwa guna may find expression in the same way: in deep sleep! Thus we have explained for us the fact that sattwa guna alone is not enough to lift us even farther—out of the gunas altogether, into the state known as *triguna rahitam*: beyond all the three gunas. Within sattwa, therefore, are the seeds of return to tamas. In fact, the waves of our consciousness toss constantly up and down. The best person may in time, through a single fault, become evil; the worst person has the divine spark within him which can lift him to become among the best.

One part of this illustration Yogananda did not trouble himself to go into, and that is the trough in the ocean that necessarily compensates for the upward bulge of a wave. In this trough, we find the middle, activating part pushing downward instead of upward. Thus we find manifested what Yogananda did describe: the fact that rajoguna has two directions. There is raja-sattwa, and rajo-tamo. Some of our activating qualities lead upward toward sattwa—for example, a desire to help the homeless or the ill—and others of our qualities lead downward toward tamas—for example, a desire to shirk one's duties and go partying.

Within man's nature is a vast horde of countless qualities, some of them good, some of them half-and-half, and some of them bad. Since spiritual awakening (the definition of yoga) comes when all the vrittis, or vortices of energy and consciousness in the spine are dissolved, and the energy is able to flow smoothly toward the brain, inner conflict, owing to cravings in the mind, produces confusion. We may say they cause conflict in the directions of the inner energy; it hardly knows whether its flow ought to be upward or downward. We might say also that desires leave us not knowing whether we're coming or going! This is the inner conflict.

## 2-16 | Future karmic pain can be avoided.

Yogananda used to say, "I'm tired of hearing people lament, 'It's

my karma. I can't avoid it!' All karma can be transcended!" What is the spiritual path expected to do for us if not, as Krishna put it in the Gita, to help us "get away from My ocean of suffering and delusion!"? (This is the third time so far in this book that I've used this quote. I hope it is sinking in! My Guru quoted it often, for that is what this world is: a world of *maya* (delusion).)

There are many remedies for looming disaster of all kinds. Don't huddle in the dark, moaning, "Oh, it's my karma!"

When you reach the state of *jivan mukta*, and rise above the ego altogether, even the strongest karma will pass you by as though a refrigerator were poised on a high floor above you, ready to squash you like a beetle, and you simply shifted out of its range. The refrigerator will fall, but the fall won't touch you.

## **2-17 | The cause of that avoidable pain is the union of that which sees and that which is seen.**

I was puzzled by this sutra at first. But then I found that the words, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, used by many commentators, do not appear in the Sanskrit original. And then the sutra made perfect sense to me. When whatever we see or experience seems real to us, it can cause us pain. Non-attachment should be carried to the point where nothing in this world seems real. We should make it a definite point in our lives to dismiss the thought of pain, whenever our bodies experience it. This is why Christian monastics have often worn hair shirts. It is the reason for the ancient practice of self-flagellation. But such practices are associated with negative thoughts such as expiation for past sins, and I really doubt whether they really expiate anything!

It is better, I feel, to try to rise above the normal pains in our lives—the actual results of our own past karmas—than to inflict pain on ourselves deliberately with the idea of *wanting* to suffer, for Christ's sake or for any other reason.

Pains come in life. They are, to a large degree, mental. Notice a little child, stumbling and hitting his knee on something. He waits



for *you* to react. If you show pity, he may start crying. But if you treat the event casually and say something like, “All right, Johnny, get up and try again!” the chances are he will pay no attention to that little inconvenience of what may even cause a bruise.

I have mentioned more than once in these pages the experience of going to a dentist. My reason for doing so is that it is familiar to most of us. Having someone drill your teeth can be painful and unsettling, even though most people take pain-deadening medication like Novocain.

I have found it an excellent opportunity to practice non-attachment by not accepting any painkiller when I go to the dentist. (It strengthens the will power to accept uncringingly whatever pain we must experience.)

What I do is, quite simply, tell myself, “There is no pain!” I remove my mind from the “events” happening in my mouth, and think one-pointedly about other things. Perhaps I will compose a song, or work mentally on its lyrics. Perhaps I will work out some problem with a book I am writing. I think it is better to concentrate on something mental, so that my mind is not focused on the body at all. Dental problems have been a particular problem of mine, because colitis in childhood forced me for several years to follow a non-dairy diet; this abstention lowered the calcium content in my body. My dentist in Bucharest, every time I cried too loudly while he was working on my teeth, filled them—out of “pity”—without first drilling deep enough to remove all the decay. As a result, my teeth in adulthood were an utter ruin.

One day, in a dentist’s office, the pain was too great to allow me to think pleasantly about poetry. I came then upon another solution: I told myself, “I am not this body!” I allowed my mind to expand over the surrounding countryside. Thus, my body became just a tiny object in that much greater field of awareness. The pain, then, became insignificant. You might try it! It will be only imaginative, but it helps.

Under all circumstances, retain always an even mind.

My Guru had many experiences with rising above pain. One day, a five-hundred-pound block of concrete (a “wishing well”) slipped from the hands of men who were manipulating it into place. It fell onto one of Yogananda’s feet, breaking it.

“This is a good opportunity to show you all how to rise above pain!” he announced. His face muscles were contorted with pain.

He said, “I will place my mind at the point between the eyebrows!” At once, all strain vanished from his face. He demonstrated the difference several times. Those who were there (I was not yet a disciple) said that this demonstration had impressed them deeply.

His foot swelled to the point where he couldn’t wear that shoe. The next Sunday in church, he confidently stepped into the shoe. Suddenly, the swelling went down (“Divine Mother did it,” he later told everybody), and he was able to walk out onto the platform quite naturally.

We’ve discussed karma in this book, as the cause of pain. Why—a few readers may ask—would a liberated master have to experience pain?

The truth is, great gurus often take onto their own bodies the karmic burdens of their disciples. Deep attunement with them, and compassionate identification with what they have to go through, is what enables them to shift the burden.

2-18 | What is seen (experienced) in this world consists of (what is inherent in the three gunas:) the light of refined awareness, the impulse toward outward activity, and inertia, and is present throughout the objective universe, providing both sense experience and (inner) guidance toward liberation.

Sattwa guna leads *toward* illumination, but does not in itself *provide* illumination for it is still rooted in the ego. A man may have excellent human qualities—kindness, compassion, generosity, courage for accomplishing the good, even humility—but as long as he sees these qualities as related to his ego they will define only his human nature, and will not take him beyond that nature.

How, then, can the gunas provide guidance to complete freedom from our human, egoic nature? They do so by pointing an upward direction.

In our Ananda communities, we have a chance to observe one another at close quarters, sometimes over a period of many years. Those who pitch in happily and willingly, no matter what is

required of them, are always happy. Those who think, “What’s in it for me?” are never happy, no matter how many good things come to them. And those who think, “Work! Work! Always more work!” are always unhappy.

Those, again, who think, “I will find peace in whatever I do,” are always not only happy, but calmly at peace within themselves.

Tamas does not give happiness. Rajas gives satisfaction, but not happiness. And sattwa gives constant inner peace and happiness.

Inasmuch as the unceasing search of all men is for happiness, they have sufficient incentive within themselves to rise, through the three gunas, until they develop a desire to get out of the ego, and out of the gunas, altogether.

## 2-19 | The stages of the gunas are gross, less gross, definable, and beyond definition.

What Patanjali is doing here is not describing the specific activities of each guna, but pointing out that all the gunas are like veils, covering the pure light of Spirit. Tamo guna is like a fourth veil, darkening that light. Rajo-tamo is the mind without that fourth veil; the qualities it manifests are less gross, and therefore less specific. Rajo-sattwa manifests definable traits, for this quality takes the mind upward by specific actions the virtue of which is that they purify one’s nature. And sattwa is the last veil, through which the light shines clearly, though indefinitely. Kindness, non-attachment, humility, and the like cannot be so clearly defined as greed, avarice, lust, etc.

## 2-20 | That which sees (experiences through the senses), though apparently colored by the mind, is (in reality) pure consciousness.

The pure consciousness of the Atman is not touched by what the ego sees (experiences) through the senses. We should try to remain

unaffected by anything—to be never afraid; ever unmoved by gain or loss; untouched by any pleasure or pain.

Does this mean we should enjoy *nothing*? receive gifts stoically? view even the most beautiful sunset with a yawn? Patanjali did not mean to turn us into robots! My Guru, for example, had a simply *delicious* sense of humor! When things happened around him that would normally set anyone smiling, he would show delight. When I looked into his eyes, however, I saw no ego there: he enjoyed everything with the joy of God. When people gave him things, he would not spurn them with an expression of contempt: he would *show* gratitude. (Later in this book we will address a teaching, attributed by some translators to Patanjali, regarding the reception of gifts. We will see that his meaning was not directed toward a person's outward behavior.) My Guru was sensitive to the feelings of others, and did not want to disappoint them. And as for enjoying life, that, too, he enjoyed *inwardly*, with the joy of God. He could weep when his father died. He could rejoice in happy experiences. In his every enjoyment or sorrow, however, his eyes showed complete inner calmness and non-attachment.

Once in Puri, India, I met a sadhu whose age was 132. Surely, to reach such an age, he must have developed at least some wisdom. He said to me, “You should enjoy *nothing*.”

“What,” I replied, “not even a beautiful sunset?”

“Nothing!” he replied aloofly.

I thought to myself, “What a *dry* way to live!”

My Guru, on the contrary, enjoyed virtually everything! Once, as a boy, he even ate with evident relish a handful of putrid rice. But his enjoyment was always inward. He enjoyed all things as reminders of God's bliss!

## 2-21 | What is seen exists only for the sake of Him (that) who sees.

God doesn't see the world as if from the top of Mount Olympus. He *is* in everything that can be seen. He is at its heart: center everywhere, circumference nowhere. He created everything as a manifestation of His own bliss. I have put it this way: He created

everything because it is the very nature of bliss to manifest itself. All Creation appeared for His own delectation.

2-22 | Though demolished (as delusion) by one who has attained his goal, it remains a universal reality for (all) other beings.

What is perceived as non-existent by those who have attained their spiritual goal (enlightenment), seems altogether real to those still struggling in delusion. Pleasure seems real. Pain seems real. Happiness seems real. Suffering seems real. The life we live here on earth seems to “earthlings” a permanent reality. Yet it has not even the reality of a bubble! We should remind ourselves, in the face of all of life’s ups and downs, that all this is a dream from which, someday, we will awake—and much sooner if, even in the dream, we try always to dream about the dawn of final awakening.

2-23 | The identity of the owner with that which he owns gives (his possessions) power over him; he thinks them part of himself.

People who take pride in their possessions actually grieve if any of them are stolen or even slightly damaged. My Guru used to say, “It is all right to have possessions, but be careful that they don’t possess you!”

2-24 | The cause of this identity is ignorance.

It is ignorance to identify yourself with anything external. We should look inward, within ourselves, for the Truth.

## **2-25 | Without this ignorance, no such identity occurs. Thus comes the complete freedom of the Seer.**

With no such outer union or attunement, one becomes free from all *maya* (delusion), and is free.

## **2-26 | Uninterrupted, conscious discrimination is the best method for penetrating the veil of ignorance.**

It is not enough to be discriminating only while meditating, or while facing life's problems when one is calm. One must be discriminating also in the whirl of life's most intense activities. To do this, keep the heart's feelings flowing upward toward the spiritual eye, and keep the energy in the brain focused at the point between the eyebrows. If you must choose between the two, focus at the point between the eyebrows. Ask yourself whenever you are faced with a choice, "What shall I do?" And at the end of each day, go through everything you did that day and ask yourself (as counseled in the Bhagavad Gita), "Which side won today: my good soldiers? or my bad?"

Such constant, conscious exercise of discrimination is essential if one would break out of this prison of delusion.

## **2-27 | One's wisdom in the final stage is sevenfold. [Sage Beda Byasa, in his commentary on Patanjali, lists these seven attainments as follows:] The seeker has no need to know anything more; the cause of all suffering, having been understood, suffering itself is gradually eliminated; attaining samadhi, one finally eliminates every cause of suffering; he attains**

**complete discrimination, requiring no further effort in that direction; sattwa guna becomes predominant in the mind; in the sixth stage, the three gunas fall away, and the chitta (subtle feeling) becomes calm; finally, only the Self remains.**

2-28 | By the practice of the several limbs of yoga, impurities disappear, and the light of pure wisdom and discrimination dawns.

2-29 | The eight limbs of yoga are 1, *yama* (self-denial); 2, *niyama* (observance); 3, posture; 4, withdrawal of the energy; 5, interiorization of the mind; 6, concentration; 7, meditation; 8, absorption.

We shall discuss each of these eight “limbs” in depth later on, so let me now give only an overview.

First, it must be understood that this is not *Patanjali’s* system, uniquely his own. He has merely delineated the stages through which every spiritual seeker must pass, regardless of his religion or path to God.

Second, although this is the universal *path* to God, Patanjali’s word for the stages is *limbs*. His reason for that word is that even the first one cannot be fully perfected until one has developed the others, including the last one. Thus, the “stages” are also comparable to the limbs on a body—eight, in this case, not four—all of them interdependent.

Third, Patanjali is not recommending specific practices so much as stages of perfection. He is not saying, “Do this,” so much as, “Be this.” Although there are specific and different things one can do to achieve those states of being, the practices varying from one culture, religion, and one individual to another, the states of being

themselves remain unaltered.

2-30 | The *yamas* consist of non-harmfulness (harmlessness); non-deceit (truthfulness); non-covetousness; continence; and non-attachment.

In the path of right spiritual action, there are five attitudes to avoid, and five other attitudes to cultivate. These are the Do's and the Don't's of right action. All these attitudes must be understood primarily as mental attributes, not as specific actions.

Thus, of the five *yamas*, number one, *ahimsa or non-harmfulness (harmlessness)*, means primarily not to wish harm to any living creature—not even to any lifeless object. It is not feasible in this world never to step on harmless ants, for example. When inhaling, one inhales and kills countless harmless tiny creatures. When eating, even if one eats only vegetables, it is impossible not to kill them by cooking and, indeed, consuming them. If confronted by a tiger in the jungle, it is better to kill it than to allow it to kill you—this, for the simple reason that man stands higher on the evolutionary ladder. And if one man threatens to kill a whole village, let us say, it is better to kill him than to let him kill hundreds.

I was in Seville, Spain, a few years ago. A guide was showing me around the old castle. She said, “Alfonso X and his father, Ferdinand, drove the Moors mostly out of Spain, but Alfonso’s successor, Sancho, was more tolerant.”

“Tolerant?” I asked, “or indifferent?”

There are times when higher principles demand engagement in righteous war. One has to do harm, in order to prevent the perpetuation of still greater harm. To inflict one’s beliefs on others is wrong, but to prevent others (even by violence) from inflicting their beliefs on others: this is right, because necessary.

The war of Kurukshetra in the Bhagavad Gita is really symbolic of the inner war every human must wage in his own conscience between right and wrong. It is a truth outwardly also: We must be firm in our principles, and not allow anyone to weaken them with such pleas as, “Let us be tolerant.” To tolerate harmful evil is



wrong. Evil must be resisted.

Everything in this world is relative. There are good, better, and best; and there are also bad, worse, and worst. The principle of relativity applies to the merits and demerits of action as much as to the quality of things. The yamas cannot, therefore, be applied absolutely, as certain religious sects have tried to do. The important thing is not to *wish* harm to anyone—not even, as I said, to inanimate objects. For it is the *wish* to damage, to hurt, to cause suffering, that is the true sin. Even words—*especially* words!—can harm. My Guru used to say, “People say that women are weaker than men, but a woman with a six-inch tongue can kill a man six feet tall!”

Paired with harmlessness, of course, is the quality of kindness, for as one ceases to wish harm, there naturally appears in the heart a feeling of deep benevolence for all.

2. Non-deceit, or truthfulness, means (again) to be truthful above all in thought. There are times when it is better to resort to kindly fiction. Benevolence is the main criterion, for divine truth is always beneficial. If you visit a friend in the hospital and see him pale to the point of death, it may be better to tell him, “Well, I’ve seen you look better!” than to say, “Good heavens, I’ve never seen you look so *terrible*!” Speak the beneficial truth, always, for truth (in its true, divine meaning) *is* beneficial.

Often, to be strictly truthful, it is better to remain silent. If someone asks you even a trivial question, such as, “How do you like this dress?” and you don’t really like it at all, say to her, “Molly, I can’t really say I like it, but the important thing is that it suits your taste. Tastes differ. I think we should wear whatever makes us happy.” Is this tactful enough? I’m notorious for speaking my mind *too* clearly, so if this doesn’t do it for you, find another formula that will be kind but that won’t compromise your integrity.

3. Non-covetousness means not to want anything that isn’t yours already. Enjoy things, but without personal attachment; don’t send out grappling irons to them from your heart—the hooks of ego!

Yogananda once visited Radio City Music Hall, in New York. He told himself, “I have paid the price of admission. Everything in here, therefore, is mine to enjoy.” He went around, enjoying all the

sights. “As I left,” he said, “I returned the building to the management, with gratitude.” The gratitude, I am sure, was not only for what he had seen, but also for the fact that he coveted none of it.

You can enjoy a sunset without coveting it. So why, when you see things in this world that please you, should you wish to possess them personally? Enjoy everything with the joy of God.

The positive side of non-covetousness is the awareness that you already *are* everything! When you know God, you will become one with all there is in all existence.

4. Continence might be put negatively, as the other yamas are, by saying simply, non-indulgence in sex. Actually, this yama, though put negatively, is *brahmacharya*, which means, “flowing with Brahma.” Continence, for most people, is a frightening prohibition. Sex, my Guru used to say, is the greatest delusion. From sexual desire proceeds all the outward direction of one’s energies, and therefore all the involvement in other delusions: desire for wealth, for mind-numbing alcohol or drugs, for fame, power, and all the mighty host of warriors for evil described in the Bhagavad Gita.

Sex completely involves one’s thoughts in outwardness. But the sense of touch, when transmuted, becomes the realization of God’s bliss in all space.

Sex serves only the purpose of keeping the world populated. But Yogananda explained that Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden could reproduce without sexual union. Eve received inspiration from Adam, and with that inspiration invited compatible souls from the astral world to enter their family. Her energy, combined with that of those astral souls ready to reincarnate, materialized their bodies—first, in the tiny forms of babies. The tree at the center of the garden was the spine. The forbidden fruit it contained was the pleasure of sex.

My Guru said to me, “Men are more drawn to sex than women are, but women have their troubles, too: women are more drawn toward *maya* (delusion).” It is more the countless little things that trap women! Women also pay much more attention to their own appearance, an attitude which clearly reflects egoism. The message to women on a poster during World War II was, “Join the Navy and let the world see you!”

Sex, however, remains central to all human delusions. If girls don't have the same interest in the sex act itself, they spend (so it seems to me) even more time talking about boys than boys do about girls.

Men, as a result of their sex drive, often become aggressive, which certainly is a negative symptom of ego-consciousness. But the reason sexual pleasure is to be avoided at all costs is that it depletes the body's energy. A single ejaculation of sperm is equivalent, my Guru used to say, to the loss of a quart of blood. To describe the effect of sex on the human male, there is the expression, "He looks like a man on the last day of his honeymoon!"

The natural direction of male energy is outward, even as the male organ is outside the body. The direction of female energy, on the other hand, is more naturally inward, as the female organ is placed inside.

Women, too, have to pay energetically for the pleasure of sexual indulgence, though their sacrifice comes more through parturition (child-bearing). Women, however, who indulge too frequently in sexual intercourse age prematurely. My Guru said they also become sterile, owing to so much male heat entering their bodies. And of course, there are also their inevitable monthly periods—a drain in themselves.

There is, undoubtedly, a certain beauty in romance, but how quickly it fades! It is like a flower-bordered entrance to a life of increasingly shared misery! My Guru said of women, "There she sits like a queen, ruling you because you cannot rule yourself." And, of men, "They become abusive for the same reason—lack of self-control." The basic reason for our final, inevitable dissatisfaction with every human fulfillment is that we are all destined for the highest soul-satisfaction: union with the bliss of God. Nothing less can ever satisfy us for long.

Sexual self-control is indispensable on the spiritual path. It creates a vital store of energy in the body, and enables one to direct that energy upward, toward the brain. Men, especially, who achieve self-control become mentally brilliant.

Those who are not able to achieve total control should try to be as moderate as possible, gradually withdrawing the mind and energy, and redirecting it to a higher level. Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, says, "Of what use is (mere) suppression?" While indulging in the sex act, do not give in to it mentally. Rather,

observe yourself objectively and tell yourself, “I am inwardly free!”

The positive side of continence is that it helps one to love all mankind, men and women equally, as your own in God. In marriage, continence increases the love between man and wife. Continence, moreover, is a great aid in overcoming ego-consciousness.

To gain the full benefits of continence, one must be completely continent for at least twelve years—an entire cycle of Jupiter.

5. Non-attachment is the fifth yama. It has often been translated to mean the non-acceptance of gifts. My Guru, however, accepted gifts, as have most other saints I have known. Not to do so would be ungracious. The whole purpose of not receiving gifts is to strengthen one’s non-attachment. This yama, then, is a mental quality, not a specific outward act.

The positive fruit of non-attachment is complete inner freedom. Non-covetousness, the third yama, is not wishing to possess what is not yours. Non-attachment is not considering what is yours to be, even so, truly your own. One good practice for developing this quality is to give away freely to others anything of yours that they may covet.

Feel that whatever you possess is yours only on loan from God. It isn’t really your own.

What about your children? Yes, them too. God has sent them to you, and God will take them back again when He chooses. If a child of yours were to die and to be born next door, the chances are you wouldn’t even recognize him (or her).

And what about your wife or husband? What about your other relatives? Love will certainly draw back to you all those you love now. But in the long, winding path of countless incarnations, you really have only one true friend: God. Cultivate your friendship with Him, and, as Jesus put it, “All these things shall be added unto you.”

Make this your constant affirmation: “I need no one, in myself I am free! I need nothing, in myself I am free! I am free, ever free, in myself I am free! I am blissful, ever free, in myself I am free!”

time, place, or circumstance, are the Great Vows.

They may be called vows, or resolutions, but they are “great” because they presuppose actual fulfillment. They are true, as I said earlier, for everybody. Anybody who wants even peace of mind, let alone those who want to find God, would do well to follow them.

On the other hand, again as I said earlier, to become *perfect* in any of them is only possible when we have attained personal perfection in the highest state of samadhi.

2-32 | The *niyamas* (observances) consist of purity, contentment, austerity (accepting but not causing pain), self-study (introspection), and openness to higher truths.

1. Purity used to be translated, “cleanliness.” Both words will do. That is impure, and unclean, which obscures the presence of God. If one doesn’t bathe regularly—several times a day, in hot climates—it becomes difficult to rise above body-consciousness. Purity means also to shun gross company; it means to avoid both telling and listening to dirty jokes; avoiding people whose vocabulary is unkind, boastful, or coarse; and avoiding those whose subject of conversation is heavily laced with ego and with contempt for others.

2. Contentment (*santosha*) is described in the Mahabharata as the supreme virtue, for from it flow all the other virtues. Whatever your lot in life, be contented with it. There is a truth here which is not evident to everybody: contentment, by placing you in harmony with divine law, actually ensures that all your needs will be provided for. Even if your past karma is very bad, if in the midst of failure, loss, and disappointment you determine to remain contented, your needs will be fulfilled.

For contentment, when rightly practiced, is not a passive virtue. It presupposes, under all circumstances, an energetic, bright attitude.

True contentment is an act of divine faith. It is not an emotional

state, for it thrives only in inner calmness. To say, “I have a nice home, a good wife, good children, a good income; I’m contented,” is to miss the point entirely. Mere outward fulfillment is a condition: true contentment depends on no outer condition. It depends on serenity of heart.

3. Austerity means withholding energy from going in any direction you’d like to take. It means accepting, but not causing, pain. Self-deprivation builds up energy to be dispensed in a more important direction, such as God-communion. This quality can develop pride, in which case it becomes its own enemy. It is most safely practiced, then, in a spirit of benevolence, of wanting to bless everybody.

To accept pain unflinchingly takes will power, but it also takes mental detachment from the body. To develop this ability, start in little ways. Place food in your mouth, and try not to taste it. Take a cold shower, and don’t let the cold affect you. Willingly accept slights or insults from others, but don’t be inwardly affected by anything they say. Tell jokes against yourself. When others laugh at you, laugh with them. Benevolence is the best way to overcome any pains received—yes, even physical ones. For a benevolent feeling toward your body lessens, or even eliminates, any pain felt there. And benevolence is also a way (obviously so) of overcoming any impulse to cause pain in others.

When one is truly committed to what he believes in, he should be willing to fail, or even to die, in his endeavor to accomplish it.

4. *Swadhyaya* is often translated as study of the scriptures. *Swa*, however, means the self. The object of study, then, is the self. Self-study means more than introspection, for it means also, “self-awareness.” An example: I am now an old man, and have become a little wobbly. But I find it a blessing in one important respect, for I am forced, now, to be more aware of every move I make lest I take a good tumble! Be aware, whatever your age, of how you move; how you sit; of the tone of your voice; of the way you react to others, and how you show interest in them.

Be aware of how you laugh. Some people bray like donkeys! Some people laugh with a loud heartiness that betrays insensitivity to others. Some people’s laughter is nasal, displaying intellectual pride. Some people’s laughter is warm and embracing. There are

many kinds of laughter. Listen to it in others. Others can be a good gauge for your own behavior—not to criticize, but to help you decide how you want to present yourself to the world.

Self-awareness also is a kind of introspection—not analytical, but often resulting in self-analysis.

In fact, introspection follows naturally on the heels of self-awareness.

5. Openness to higher truths is usually written as “worship.” So much more is meant by the word “worship,” however, than actually sitting in meditation or kneeling in a church. Using this word, therefore, may narrow the horizon to a limited time every day, and to a narrow location in space. In fact, our every thought should be directed in a worshipful spirit to God; our every act should be an act of worship. We should be open always to inner guidance, and open to receive God’s blessings even in the form of apparent misfortune.

## **2-33 | When disturbed by negative thoughts, think of their polar opposites.**

When you are disturbed by thoughts of dislike for someone, concentrate on people you like. When you feel anger, tell yourself: “This is God’s world, not mine! He knows what He is doing! Why should I assume responsibility for anything that happens?”

Give love, when others give you hatred. See in all of them the desire for the very same goal you have: happiness. Thus, you will come to feel love for everyone on earth.

## **2-34 | When negative thoughts arise (in the mind), or when one feels impelled to commit acts of violence whether out of craving, anger, or infatuation, and whether indulged in with mild, moderate, or extreme intensity—such thoughts and**

**impulses are all based on ignorance and are certain to cause one pain. At such times, too, think their opposite thoughts.**

Negative thoughts and impulses occur sometimes in the minds even of basically positive people. Remember, we have a huge population of citizens dwelling in these countries that we call our own personalities. Even saintly people may sometimes feel the sudden impulse to shout angrily at others. These thoughts and impulses must be brought under control; they must never be indulged in. And if, in a moment of laxity, they *are* indulged, one must be perfectly truthful with himself, and never excuse or justify that sudden “jerk” of the mind as due to any influence but his own ignorance.

When such thoughts or impulses arise in the mind, fill your mind with their opposites: when craving arises, tell yourself, “I need nothing! I want to share everything with all!”; when anger arises, be especially accepting of whatever happens in your life, of whatever people say or do to you; of however people behave around you; when you feel infatuation toward someone, or for any object, tell yourself, “I want God alone! In myself, I am ever free!” If a human face haunts you, think forcibly of some divine image and tell yourself “That is infinitely more attractive!”

**2-35 | In the presence of one who is firmly grounded in harmlessness, all hostilities cease.**

Even wild animals will act tamely in your presence. Such will be your magnetic aura that, even if people are fighting among themselves, they will become kindly and calm.

I know many stories from the lives of saints I have encountered that support the truth of this saying. Cobras withdraw their hoods. Tigers become as friendly as pussycats. Criminals convert to a better way of life.

The answer to threatened violence is to project a calm spirit of harmlessness.



But remember, the greater the opposing force, the greater must also be the magnetism with which you confront it.

2-36 | To one who is firmly established in truthfulness, his very word becomes binding on objective reality.  
(Whatever he says must come to pass.)

To be truthful is to be in tune with things as they really are. But the truthfulness of which I write is a dynamic truthfulness, spoken in the realization that truth itself is inspiring, and is far more than dull fact. Try to attune your awareness of what is to its highest octave as an expression of the bliss of God.

When you speak always from that level of consciousness, your every word will have power.

2-37 | To one who is established in non-covetousness, all riches come.

When you have no desire for others' possessions, or for what is not yours by right, there comes an inner relaxation which produces the magnetism to attract whatever you need in life.

According to my life experience, what happens is that, when you happily accept things as they are, there comes a wholly positive expectation of life, which in its turn becomes magnetic enough to draw to yourself anything you need.

When I was in college, I developed a theory: "If you want to be lucky, expect luck to come to you, then go out and meet it half way." This attitude has produced astonishing results in my life—too many to enumerate here. But as I study Patanjali, I see that this sutra matches my own experience as he defined it.

2-38 | One who is established in continence achieves full

vigor.

I have gone into this truth extensively, above. What happens is this: vigor enters the body through the medulla oblongata, drawn by the will power. “The greater the will,” my Guru taught, “the greater the flow of energy.” Continence not only strengthens the will, but increases the available energy.

**2-39 | One who becomes established in non-attachment develops the ability to remember his past lives.**

The reason for this phenomenon is that attachment to this particular body, and to the places, possessions, events, and things of this particular time, make this incarnation appear to be your only reality. When attachment to present reality is overcome, your view of reality naturally expands over a broader field.

**2-40 | For one who becomes fully cleansed and pure spiritually, there arises a disinclination for physical contact with others, and for the touch of one’s own body.**

It is the sense of touch, more than any of the other senses, which awakens sexual desire. Thus, complete purity, physical and mental, leads to effortless continence.

The positive aspect of this otherwise negative disinclination is that it makes one long for the touch of pure bliss in all space.

**2-41 | One gains, moreover, a purely sattwic outlook, the ability to concentrate one-pointedly, a cheerful**

attitude, mastery over the senses, and an ability for inner communion.

Purity begins to look better and better! A purely sattwic outlook makes one see only the good in everything. Those people who tell themselves they owe it to—the world? themselves? their growing children? society? their self-respect?—to see the dark side of everything haven't nearly the impact on everything and everybody that those have whose outlook on life is sattwic and forever cheerful.

All good things, moreover, come from sattwa: sense mastery, concentration, inner communion.

And all these things follow from having a pure consciousness.

## 2-42 | Contentment leads to superlative happiness.

One cannot attain true happiness by merely hoping for it, gloomily! One must decide to *be* happy if he would go beyond contentment and achieve a state of vital, vibrant happiness.

## 2-43 | Austerity cleanses one's consciousness of impurities of both body and senses, resulting in the appearance of special powers.

Fasting is one example of a way to cleanse the body. Restraining the senses from outer distraction frees the mind to concentrate on worthwhile matters. (In our modern times, people customarily submit themselves to an incessant barrage of television, radio, telephone, the internet, etc.) It will strengthen our will if we teach ourselves to accept pain stoically, but we should never cause pain in others.

As in these ways our consciousness is cleansed of impurities and distractions, some among us develop the power to make things

happen as we'd like them to; to understand something of our past lives; to see into the future; to be aware of events taking place far away. There are other powers also. All of us have these powers latent within us, for they are inherent in every soul.

## **2-44 | Self-study and introspection aids communion with one's *ishtadevata*, or chosen form of God.**

God, of course, is without form. But just as He/She has produced all forms in the universe, so God has appeared to countless saints in whatever forms they loved best. Why not? It is not their mental creation: it is a superconscious expression of the Divine Itself.

How can self-study effect this end? That is more of a problem! Obviously, there is more meaning in both “self-study” and “introspection” than either of these concepts suggest. The usual translation, “study of the scriptures,” falls almost laughably short of the goal. Yet, in that expression there is a hint of deeper meaning. Swadhyaya must mean above all self-awareness of some higher kind—awareness of the true Self, surely. The more aware you become of your own higher Self—that part of you which is not involved in outward activities, but which dwells within you, watching everything that goes on in your life—the more you will approach awareness of the divine within you.

## **2-45 | By complete openness to God, samadhi is attained.**

Most translations say, “By complete surrender to God,” but that word *surrender* suggests someone who finds himself with his back to the wall, escape impossible, and finally—as a last resort and only to save his life—surrendering himself to an enemy. None of these images applies to someone who, himself, desperately desires oneness with God! This, then, is what I mean by complete openness.

Yes, we must, and must *desire to*, give ourselves to Him completely.

When there remains no corner of our selfhood that we hold back from God, then alone can samadhi come.

## **2-46 | Asana (the third “limb” of *Ashtanga Yoga*) means to be seated in a firm, pleasant, and relaxed position.**

My Guru explained this position as that of keeping the spine straight, with the body relaxed.

This passage, be it noted, is the only place in the Yoga Sutras from which physical yoga enthusiasts draw their scriptural authority. It is spurious! Yet the very word, “yoga,” has become in the popular mind a system of elaborate bodily positions. Hatha Yoga (the name of this system) is truly an excellent way of keeping the body in top condition, but it is simply a mistake to identify it with Patanjali’s yoga teachings.

The purpose of *asana* is to enable one to rise above body-consciousness. A straight spine is necessary, for when meditating the energy must be allowed to rise up the spine freely. The best way to relax the body completely is, first, to inhale and tense one’s body all over, equalizing the tension all over the body; then to throw the breath out and relax, again, all over. Do this three times. From then on, remain motionless for as long as possible. One may consider that he has mastered *asana* if he can remain completely motionless, with a straight, upright spine for three hours. Motionlessness will enable him to become aware of the inner energies in the body.

## **2-47 | By reducing one’s natural tendency toward restlessness, and by visualizing infinity, true posture is acquired.**

Sitting very still, and resisting the temptation to look around, to scratch, to shift about, to sniff or to swallow, is the state of *asana*. It will help very much also to visualize infinite space all around you.

My Guru counseled, after your last deliberate exhalation when you are sitting very still, to gaze millions of miles through infinite space, to the left; to the right; before you; behind you; and above. Visualize yourself seated, bodiless, suspended in vast space.

And then, only, begin your meditation practices.

## 2-48 | From this point, the dualities cease to disturb (the mind).

By thus eliminating awareness of objective reality with its ups and downs, its hopes and disappointments—its essential nature, in short—you are prepared to go deeper in meditation.

## 2-49 | The next stage in meditation is to calm the flow of the inner life-force.

Pranayama, as I pointed out earlier, is usually translated to mean “breath control.” In fact, however, prana means energy. In the human body, there is a close correlation between the two. When the inner life-force is disturbed, the breathing becomes irregular. When the life-force is calm, the breath becomes calm. It is the life-force, in reality, which controls the breath, but one can also use the breath—breathing calmly and deliberately, for example—to regulate or calm the life-force. Thus, it is not actually an error to mistake control of the life-force (the energy of the body) with control of the breath.

The important thing, in meditation, is not only to still the movement of the body, but after that also to withdraw the life-force from the senses to the spine. At death, the life-force follows this same process, but it is usually irreversible by people’s will power. In meditation, the process is under the control of the will. The energy must be withdrawn to the spine, and one’s sense-telephones, as Yogananda called them, silenced. Only then can one even begin to meditate in the true sense of the word. But wait! There is more! Next, the mind itself must be interiorized! And first, there is more

to know about controlling the life-force itself.

2-50 | The emphasis while breathing (and therefore in the flow of the life-force) may be more on inhalation, on exhalation, or on stillness. It may be on space entering the body (rather than on the body's breathing); on the timing of the inhalation and exhalation (whether rapid or slow), and on the number of counts in each inflow and outflow—whether the flow be short or long.

A very good technique for learning control, here, is one I taught earlier in connection with sutra 10 in the first book. Simply watch the flow of breath in the upper nostrils, mentally repeating “Hong” with the inhalation, “Sau” with the exhalation. “Hong” is actually a bij, or “seed,” mantra for *aham*, “I,” the *ahankara* (ego). Ego-consciousness, as I’ve stated before, is centered in the medulla oblongata. But to chant “Hong” at the root of the nose (at the point where the air actually enters the head, near the point between the eyebrows) brings ego-consciousness in the head gradually to its positive pole in the spiritual eye, the seat of superconscious enlightenment. The additional matters to think about (space, rapidity, and numbers) are means, simply, for keeping the mind focused on what one is doing.

2-51 | There is a fourth kind of pranayama which occurs during breathlessness, when one ceases to be aware of the outer world and the body.

My Guru used to say, “Breathlessness is deathlessness.” Translators have made a mess of this last clause, but breathlessness ensues only when awareness of outer reality fades, and one becomes increasingly aware of the inner space.

## **2-52 | In consequence, the veil hiding the inner light is removed.**

Divine sight is always there. It is simply veiled from our vision. When that veil is removed, the light is visible. We don't actually need to achieve anything!

## **2-53 | Then the mind becomes fit for (true) concentration.**

True concentration comes only when all distractions to it have been removed.

## **2-54 | The fifth state on the path of contemplation is known as *pratyahara*: interiorization of the mind, when the senses are withdrawn, and the chitta (essential feeling) is calm.**

Until the stage of *pratyahara* has been attained, *real* concentration cannot be achieved. Real meditation means one-pointed concentration on the Inner Truth. Concentration, my Guru used to say, is the ability to concentrate one-pointedly on one thing at a time. Meditation is focusing that concentration on God or on one of His attributes (peace, calmness, bliss, love, power, sound, light, and wisdom).

## **2-55 | From this follows supreme mastery over the senses.**

It should be noted that Patanjali did not say, "permanent



mastery.” He meant, only as applied to that particular day’s meditation. The discerning devotee will surely realize that there remains much more work to be done! We still have *dharana* (concentration itself), *dhyana*, (meditation), and *samadhi* (oneness) to consider.

From the above, it is easy to understand why hermits retire to Himalayan caves for meditation!

*End of Second Pada*

# Vibhuti Pada

## THE THIRD BOOK

### *The Accomplishments*

3-1 | Dharana is concentration: fixing one's full attention on one place, object, or idea at a time.

I have been astonished in my life to find that it is not uncommon that good businessmen, and people who achieve success in other worldly walks of life, may well have a penchant for spiritual progress. My Guru's most advanced disciple, in fact, had achieved great success in the business world. I myself, who grew up in a business environment, had come to reject it with contempt. God and truth mattered in my life, not "filthy lucre." After meeting my Guru, I had to readjust certain of my values. I must admit, sometimes it has been with a certain sense of shock!

Still, the fact remains. The ability to concentrate one-pointedly is more important than any esthetic values! My interest in the arts, in music, and in literature is only a human trait; it is not necessarily a spiritual one.

I doubt that very many persons of deep concentration have truly achieved the state described by Patanjali as *dharana*. Nevertheless, when one can concentrate with relatively one-pointed attention on any problem, no matter how worldly his problem, he is a thousand times more likely to solve it.

So let us think of concentration, for the moment, in the most mundane areas of life. All of us have, latent within us, the faculty of

intuition that can take us to the heart of a problem without reasoning it all out.

Science, in this case, has missed the mark by a wide margin. Even the IQ exams, which measure what is known as people's "intelligence quotient," fail to tell us to what heights a child will rise in the world. Some people with the highest IQs end up as bootblacks or in other less-than-dignified lines of work. One boy with an IQ of 140 had a girl friend whose IQ was less than 100. Moreover, what he found most attractive about her was not (as one might expect) her physical beauty, but the clarity of her *insight* into problems and into other people. She had clear intuition in such matters.

Too much attention is paid, during our growing years, to intellect, and not nearly enough to clear insight. Intuition is vitally important to clear understanding. And dharana opens this window in our minds. The calmer and more removed we are from outer distractions, the more we somehow *know* whether an investment, let us say, will pay off, or even which horse will win in a race.

Many years ago, in Mexico City, the father of a family with which I had become friendly was an ardent aficionado of the horse races. His wife and his daughter weren't interested, but one day they decided to accompany him. They knew nothing about horses. Since the whole purpose of horse racing (as I understand it) is to bet on which horse will win, the two women bet according to their inner feelings; the man bet according to the form book. What amazed him, as he later told me, was that he lost consistently, whereas they just as consistently won.

If you want to succeed at anything—anything at all—develop your concentration, which will help very much to bring out your latent intuition.

Another point might be made here: Intuition is mostly a matter of feeling. Women, who go more by feeling than men do—the male of our species tends to analyze more, and to use the intellect—are often more intuitive than men. A husband will do well if he at least listens to his wife's warnings, especially when they are delivered calmly and seriously.

The real and higher purpose of dharana, of course, is to turn it inward, in communion with the higher Self. We shall pass on now, therefore, to the next stage on the path of spiritual progress.

### 3-2 | Dhyana (meditation) is concentration on higher aspects of reality.

Here, I must confess, no translation available to me covers the ground even slightly to my satisfaction. All of them make it appear that, even at this high point on the spiritual path, we are still groveling about in the trough of matter. Come on, now! The whole purpose of yoga is to take one *beyond* material realities. But translators shovel out expressions like, “the continuous flow of cognition toward that object,” and “an unbroken flow of thought toward the object of concentration.” *What* object? A watermelon?!

Yogananda put it quite simply. “Concentration,” he said, “is fixing the mind one-pointedly on one thing at a time. Meditation is turning that concentrated mind toward God or one of His attributes.”

The attributes of God, or ways in which we can commune with Him, are (as I’ve said) eight in all: light, sound, love, wisdom, power, peace, calmness, and (most important of all) bliss. Concentration becomes meditation, truly, when the focused mind is turned toward one of His aspects, or attributes.

In meditation, it is not enough simply to hear the cosmic sound, to see the cosmic light, or to enjoy the love or the bliss. One must become so completely absorbed in that experience that he becomes one with it. This alone defines the still higher state: samadhi.

### 3-3 | When the subject (the person meditating) and the object of his meditation (God) become one, that is samadhi.

Again, translations of this sutra are altogether too intellectual and abstract. This is *God* we’re talking about: the source of all love, bliss, and delight in the universe! Can’t we get away from talking about objects of concentration, “the true nature of the object shining forth”? I have to say that, for the sincere seeker, this sort of thing makes to rise one’s gorge! It certainly isn’t Patanjali.

The thing is, by meditating deeply on any aspect of God, one

loses self-awareness and becomes completely absorbed in That. One who meditates on love becomes absorbed in a universe of love. One who meditates on light becomes absorbed in that light, expanding outward beyond the limits of material space. (Yes, space too is material! Yogananda described it as a distinct vibration, separating the physical from the astral universe.) One who meditates on sound becomes absorbed in, and one with, AUM throughout the whole cosmos. And so on!

To talk or write about these things, one must be a *devotee*, not a scholar! There are different kinds of samadhi: AUM samadhi, and so on. The scholarly intellect, dependent as it is on reason (the greatest problem of which is that it tends to feed the ego), cannot take even a single little step forward on the path to enlightenment. I know. Reason was for many years my own path to truth. Thank God I at least reasoned honestly, and thereby, finally, escaped the trap!

In reason there is no inspiration, no sweetness, no overwhelming love or bliss. And Patanjali was showing us the path to supernal Bliss! What scholars call “the true nature of the object shining forth” is the final fulfillment of all our longings! Why call it a mere “object,” as if it were equivalent to no more than a chair, or a table?

Samadhi is a state to be looked up to, to be revered with folded hands. Those who have attained it speak of it as the *summum bonum* of all existence. Truly, it pains my heart to see it written about as though it were little more than a fish to be bought at a fishmonger.

Well, having got that off my chest, I will say simply that samadhi means the state of oneness with God! I have discussed this state earlier in these pages.

3-4 | When these three (dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) are all directed toward their end, that is *samyama*, attunement with, or absorption in.

This *samyama* is a state of identification with whatever one perceives.

### 3-5 | By the mastery of samyama comes intuitive understanding.

Intuition doesn't mean imagination. It means understanding from within—understanding the inner nature of things. This is samyama.

### 3-6 | Samyama is to be practiced in stages.

Though the outer yamas and niyamas admit of clear and obvious stages, the subtler path of samyama, though less easily differentiated, must also be taken one subtle step at a time.

### 3-7 | These three (dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) are more internal than the other five limbs.

I see no need, here, for comment.

### 3-8 | Even these three are external to the seedless samadhi.

*Moksha*, or final liberation, takes one beyond the state of *jivan mukta* (freed while living). I have explained this before. With *nirbikalpa samadhi* comes freedom from any danger of falling back into ego. One still, however, remembers all his past incarnations, and must be able to recognize them all as but the play of God; ego-identification with each of them must be eradicated.

When completely free, the soul merges back into what Yogananda called “that watchful state.”

We are told that we lose nothing in God. Therefore Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita counsels this same truth: Nothing is lost. Anger

becomes transformed into acceptance and forgiveness. Hatred becomes transformed into love. The greatest grief finds its fulfillment in bliss. But one thing does seem irredeemably lost to us for all eternity: the ego. It is not! Even merged in God as the soul becomes at last, there remains in Omniscience the *memory* of the soul's separate existence apart from God. Thus, if devotees pray to that person, it is he or she specifically, and not some sort of divine abstraction, who will respond to that prayer. Jesus Christ, though fully merged in God, came as a divine incarnation not because God Himself assumed that form. He came as a fully liberated soul who had gone through countless incarnations on the earth plane, and who could speak to people from his own experience of the truth, and not as someone who, because he was a divinely created being, had never himself known earthly pain and suffering.

### **3-9 | In *sabikalpa* (the lower *samadhi*) there still remain, in latent form, impressions of objective reality.**

No one really seems to know what this sutra means. As I have written it, though very different from one translation at least ("There is the relation of cause and effect even (among them) though separated by class, space, time, on account of the unity of memory and impressions."), it does tally with the explanation of this state that was given me by my Guru.

In *sabikalpa samadhi*, one retains the sense of the reality of his ego, of the world around him (as he perceives it through his senses), and of all the so-called "realities" the ego cognizes. If he sees all this in relation to cosmic reality, they assume for him a dwindling importance. But if he sees the cosmic vision in a reverse relationship to his ego and its little, earthly realities, these assume for him, instead, a cosmic importance, and his own ego, especially, becomes inflated to the point where he believes himself to be infallible.

3-10 | When his flow of awareness becomes strong and steady (the vrittis having been smoothed) this (upward) flow becomes natural to him.

The more often the meditator enters the samadhi state and experiences the strong upward flow of energy in the spine, the more his freedom from ego and from the body seems natural to him.

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3-11 | As mental distractions dwindle and one's focus becomes more and more one-pointed, so one's inner identification with the samadhi state increases.

This seems clear enough. The more the samadhi state becomes your reality, the more absorbed in it you become.

**3-12 | When the waves of past and present impressions become smoothed, there comes complete inner calmness.**

The whole of Cosmic Creation exists only as waves of vibration on the surface of the great ocean of Spirit. When those waves become calmed in the consciousness of the individual yogi, then even though Creation continues to exist, he himself lives in the perfect calmness of the Spirit.

**3-13 | Thus has been described the transformation of a false reality into its changeless essence.**

Only Spirit is real. The world we live in is an unreal



manifestation of that consciousness. As we dream at night, and fancy ourselves living many dramatic roles, so God dreamed this universe: it is all His drama. The essence of everything will reveal itself to us someday as but a dream of our own expanded consciousness.

### **3-14 | Change resides only in Prakriti (Nature), which goes through dormant, emerging, and potential states.**

We see these changes in the advancing seasons: from spring to summer to autumn to winter. But the changes of Nature are also far beyond our human reckoning. There are localized *Pralayas*, or destructions, that may affect only one planet or small group of planets, rather than the whole galaxy, or even the whole universe. *Maha-Pralaya* is the mighty upheaval that takes place when everything is withdrawn for a time from outward manifestation—that time having the same duration as a Day of Brahma. In this Night of Brahma, so called, Prakriti or Nature is withdrawn into a latent or dormant state. In that state it still exists, as do all the countless beings who have not yet attained their liberation. When a Day of Brahma begins again, everything is spewed out into manifestation once more, to resume at the level of spiritual evolution it had attained at the onset of the last Pralaya.

Change exists only in outward manifestation. The Supreme Spirit itself is ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new, and forever changeless.

### **3-15 | The succession of changes (in Nature) is a stimulus to evolution.**

Evolution is far from the accident that it was claimed to be by Darwin. It is motivated from within, by an irresistible impulse in the very atom to grow toward greater and ever-greater self-awareness. Outward stimuli, too, act as a stick to prod life-forms

toward ever-higher stages of evolution. Famines cause them to migrate. Unseasonable cold or heat causes them either to flee or to adapt. The lower animals haven't the intelligence of man, but a leopard knows enough to approach its intended prey from downwind. The more man studies Nature, the more marvelous the intelligence of animals appears. Even the vicissitudes of bad karma can be beneficial, for they force people to rethink their priorities.

### **3-16 | By samyama (attunement with, or absorption in) on the three (basic) kinds of change—birth, life, and death—comes knowledge of the past and the future.**

These universal changes are but waves on the surface of the ocean. By absorption in the changelessness beneath these three changes, one develops the ability to know their underlying, abiding reality. Because we are involved so closely in these changes, we see life from day to day and from moment to moment. But when we realize that the soul is never born, never really lives on earth, and never dies, absorption from a spiritual level in the underlying changelessness of all that lives makes it possible for one to see the vast symphony of which this little measure, our present life, is quickly over.

### **3-17 | By the practice of samyama on a word, its significance, and the feelings awakened by these two one comes to understand the inner meaning of any word.**

Thoughts have a more universal influence than most of us realize. I was in German Switzerland a few years ago, and someone asked me a perfectly simple question about how to say something in Italian. I replied, "We're surrounded here by people thinking in German. Let's wait until we reach Lugano, in Italian Switzerland. When we get there, I'm sure I'll know the answer." Sure enough, as

soon as we reached Lugano, surrounded by people whose thoughts were in Italian, the answer popped clearly into my head.

Another example of the reality of people's thoughts: Years ago, I lived in San Francisco, in a very quiet area. Even during rush hour I could hardly hear any traffic. Even so, it was notable how, at three a.m. when most people were asleep, there was a stillness in the air that went beyond mere outward silence.

### **3-18 | By samyama on latent impressions in the mind, one comes to know his past lives.**

Deep meditation on one's latent impulses and impressions awakens clear memories of one's own past lives. All of us meet friends—countless numbers of them—from before; find ourselves in situations reminiscent of situations we held before; get a sense of *deja vu*, perhaps, when visiting places we have never seen before in this life. These experiences are by no means out of the ordinary. *Samyama* on these things will help to make them dynamic to our consciousness.

### **3-19 | *Samyama* on distinguishing marks on another person's body gives knowledge of the nature of his thoughts.**

There are easy ways to tell a person's character from the way he sits, walks, speaks, looks at you. The ways are innumerable. My knowledge of "distinguishing marks" is limited, but if Patanjali meant something simple like a drooping mouth or eyes, I think I can read these marks. Somehow, however, I suspect he meant something much subtler.

Dr. Lewis, Yogananda's first Kriya Yoga disciple in America, told me this odd little story: "One day, the Master asked me, 'Would you please remove your shirt, Doctor?' I did so. He walked around me, looking at my upper body. Then he asked, 'Would you mind taking off your trousers?' Again I did so, and he studied me some more. At

last he asked me, ‘Would you mind removing your underwear?’ I did that, too, though puzzled as to what he was getting at. He walked around me once again, carefully studying me. At last he said, ‘You have good karma, Doctor.’ He then requested me to get dressed again.”

### **3-20 | Samyama, in this case, does not refer to a knowledge of a person’s hidden motives.**

Discussion of motives requires another samyama, which will be discussed in sutra 3-35.

### **3-21 | Samyama on the body, and on the light surrounding it, can make the body invisible.**

In *Autobiography of a Yogi* there are several instances of yogis becoming invisible. Yogananda called it “an aura of invisibility.”

We can all accomplish this, though not so dramatically. If we sit in a public place and think ourselves invisible, others—even friends—may not notice our presence. You can *think* yourself invisible and go about unnoticed, though not unseen.

### **3-22 | Thus also, sounds (and other sensations) can be made to disappear.**

Everything is a manifestation of vibrations. One who is himself beyond all vibrations can manipulate the vibrations in this vibratory universe.

**3-23 | Karmas are of two kinds: those which manifest instantly, and those which manifest more slowly. By samyama on these different kinds of karma, and by observing certain portents of death, the yogi knows exactly when he will die.**

One who has the power to leave his body consciously at death is sensitive to the forces that will combine to take him out of it.

**3-24 | By samyama on friendliness, compassion, etc., one gains the power to bring out these qualities in others.**

My Guru used to say, “If you see a sad face, shoot it with the buckshot of your smiles.” And, on a much lower level, the Los Angeles traffic department popularized this little piece of advice to drivers: “Courtesy is contagious.” A realized saint wins over even enemies by the magnetism of his love.

**3-25 | By samyama on strength, as in elephants, one draws their strength to oneself.**

This is true of any quality: physical strength; artistic ability; the ability to succeed in business.

One time Yogananda was not satisfied with a painting he had commissioned an artist to paint. “How long,” he asked, “did it take you to develop your art?” The artist replied that it had taken him twenty years.

“Twenty years!” exclaimed the Master. “All that time, just to convince yourself you could paint?!”

“I’d like to see you do as well in twice that length of time,” the other replied huffily.

“Give me a week!” said the Master.

In fact, after a week Yogananda had painted a good portrait. He had someone summon the artist, who, on beholding the painting, exclaimed, “Who did that? It’s much better than mine!”

In anything you do, get in tune with whatever consciousness it takes to do it well. Above all, develop the right *magnetism*!

### 3-26 | By samyama on the inner light, knowledge of what is subtle, hidden, or remote is obtained.

Everything in creation is connected. Science tells us that it is a combination of molecules, atoms, and electrons. But science works always at a distance, as if with prongs. Everything, in fact, is a projection of God’s bliss manifesting itself ever newly. It is helpful to understand that the powers Patanjali wrote about are powers that we all have, even if to a lesser extent.

When I was in college, I took a course in classical Greek. I was trying at the time to understand the meaning of existence, and classical Greek (along with most of my other subjects) seemed to me impossibly trivial. I did no homework assignments, and hardly ever came to class. Toward the end of the semester, the professor was preparing the students for the final exam. When I condescended to appear in class, I found myself most particularly familiar with the Greek for “a,” and “the.” The professor would announce, “There are certain students here who would perhaps do better not to appear for this exam.” The others all looked at me and laughed.

Well, I determined to pass that exam. How I’d do so was quite beyond me, but pass it I would. I tried to study Greek every evening for a week, and each evening I’d put the book down in disgust with the resolution to study twice—then three times, then four, then five times—as long the next night. At last Sunday evening came, and the exam was to be the following morning! I cast about for a solution, then firmly told myself, “You’re a Greek!” With this new self-definition, it was easy to go through the grammar book! I studied for two hours with all my concentration, after which I felt like a sponge filled with water. The next day, the exam proved unusually difficult. Only two students passed it, but I was one of them!

Many years later I spent two weeks on the island of Bali, in Indonesia. On seven-thousand-feet high Mount Gunung Agung it was cold. I asked for a blanket, and the proprietor of the inn brought me a glass of water! (I learned, more years later, that our word “blanket” sounds something like their word for water!) Anyway, I made up my mind to learn how to communicate in their language. By the time I left there I had a vocabulary of 600 words, and could communicate on numerous abstract subjects, including philosophy.

What I think I did on both occasions was practice “samyama” to identify myself with the needs at hand. Samyama, in other words, is not a practice only for gaining occult powers. It can help us if we practice it on any subject we want to master. With any such subject, be it carpentry or mathematics or how to be a good leader, do “samyama” on it, first. Identify yourself with it from within, and you’ll understand quickly most of what you need to know.

Thus, it is easy to understand how concentration on the inner light can help one to achieve the knowledge of which Patanjali writes here. All creation is a manifestation of the inner light. Everything we can want to know is locked in that cosmic treasure house!

### **3-27 | By samyama on the sun, knowledge of the entire solar system can be acquired.**

By going to the *center* of any subject, it is possible to understand it in all its ramifications. Truth itself is “center everywhere, circumference nowhere.” The sun is the center of the solar system, therefore it stands to reason that you can understand its planets by doing samyama on the sun. But I don’t say everyone can accomplish this end in this way. I even suspect that the knowledge Patanjali himself obtained by such a means had more to do with truth on a spiritual level than with the kinds of sand to be found on Mars.

My Guru said, “Sun represents the father aspect of God. In my youth, I spent time at every sunrise and sundown gazing into the sun (when the sun is near the horizon, its harmful rays are filtered out; I recommend the first and last half hour of the day). This practice gave me deep revelations of wisdom.”

We can try this practice, too, if we are so inclined.

### **3-28 | Samyama on the moon gives knowledge of the stars' movements.**

Am I permitted to express skepticism regarding Patanjali's statement here? I see no connection between the moon and the movement of stars! The moon is a reflective body; the stars are other suns. I think his knowledge must have come to him by another route.

For my Guru said that the moon represents the mother aspect of God. The kind, motherly quality the Divine Mother radiates to us through the moon has a softening effect on our emotions—unless, indeed, our own emotions are violent. From the Divine Mother has come all Creation, including stars, planets, and everything. Was it, then, through attunement with the Mother aspect of God that Patanjali gained his understanding of the universe? This I can at least comprehend as a possibility.

If you do “samyama” on the moon at night, you will attract into yourself an insight into the love aspect of God.

### **3-29 | Samyama on the polestar gives knowledge of the stars' movements.**

Again, we find Patanjali counseling us to go to the center of things to understand anything related to them. The movement of sun, moon, and planets around our zodiac depends on the position of the polestar, which is determined by the tilt of our Earth. Ancient Indians were much more concerned with the effect of astrological forces on our lives than with the positioning of billions of stars throughout our galaxy. Their interest in Nature was profound, but it was directed primarily toward Nature's interactions with man.



### 3-30 | Samyama on the navel plexus gives knowledge of the body's constitution.

Here again we find a counsel to go to the center of things. To test the validity of what Patanjali wrote is beyond my capability, but I see here the same principle being applied.

### 3-31 | Samyama on the pit of the throat brings a cessation of hunger and thirst.

It seems simple enough to give this experiment a try.

### 3-32 | Samyama on the *kurma naḍi* (a subtle tortoise-shaped tube below the throat) results in motionlessness in the meditative posture.

Patanjali is giving us several “samyamas” that we can try for ourselves, to see whether and how well they work. This reference to *kurma naḍi* must signify the thyroid gland, the word *thyroid* being derived from the Greek word for shield (not so different from the shape of a tortoise). Samyama on the thyroid would help to regulate the whole body.

### 3-33 | Samyama on the light at the crown of the head (the *sahasrara*) brings the vision of masters and spiritual adepts.

You couldn't prove this teaching by me. The only vision I have ever had was the unexpected appearance of a large, green face! There are different paths to God. Vision has definitely not been mine.

Samyama on the light at the crown chakra will no doubt produce the results Patanjali claims, but, for doubting meditators, meditation should definitely be focused, as a rule, at the point between the eyebrows. The opening to the highest center comes from the spiritual eye. If one tries to reach the crown chakra (the *sahasrara*) from ordinary ego consciousness at the back of the head in the medulla oblongata, there is danger of some mental imbalance.

On the other hand, I used to follow a Tibetan practice of meditating on the thought of my Guru seated at the top of my head. I found this practice helpful when seeking his inspiration for my thoughts.

### **3-34 | These insights come spontaneously, also, to one who has attained inner purity.**

The contemplation of these so-called “powers” should not be strange to devotees. They must experience at least glimpses of them in their own lives. And yet, even as I write those words I remember someone who meditated long hours every day and, in consequence, became haughty. From haughtiness, sarcasm developed, and from sarcasm a pleasure in hurting others. Truly, egotism can enter our consciousness through many doors.

Patanjali himself warns that using one’s spiritual (or occult) powers may develop pride. We should always feel that God accomplishes everything, even breathing, *through* us; we accomplish nothing, ourselves.

### **3-35 | Samyama on the heart brings an understanding of one’s vrittis, or inner tendencies.**

Psychiatrists use their intellects when trying to understand their patients. True understanding of a person’s nature arises from the heart. Science has a firm bias against the heart’s feelings, for, as

scientists point out, the emotions are usually, in one way or another, biased. The deep, calm feeling of the heart, however, is the only tool we have that we can rely on. It is the seed of consciousness itself. Without it, we would be robots. Samyama on the heart goes deeper than all the superficial waves of emotion. It brings true understanding.

### 3-36 | The sattwic intellect and the soul are completely different. Samyama on the distinction between them gives soul-understanding.

Even the clearest intellect cannot understand the true nature of the soul, for the intellect depends on distinctions, whereas the soul is beyond distinctions. Samyama on this difference intuitively bestows an understanding of the soul.

### 3-37 | From this understanding arises supraphysical perception: subtle hearing, touch, seeing, tasting, and smelling.

In the stanza after this, Patanjali advises against the use of these, or indeed any miraculous-seeming, powers. But to gaze into the spiritual eye, to hear and commune with the subtle sound of AUM—both these are, in fact, actual meditation techniques. Surely, his meaning was quite different.

To display an ability—for example, to know what has gone on in your neighbor's home; to tell him what a delicious meal his wife served him the evening before, when you yourself were absent: such abilities are perfectly real, but they are an intrusion on your neighbor's life and serve no purpose at all except to make him marvel at your powers of clairvoyance. They are food for your ego, in other words, and can only draw yet another veil of ignorance across the mirror of your self-esteem. And here is that stanza:

3-38 | These supra-physical powers (*siddhis*) are obstacles to the attainment of samadhi, for they take the mind outward.

One obstacle to that attainment is that they can foster attachment to themselves. When I was a child I came upon a way of “beating the system.” If ever a fairy were to grant me three wishes, I’d make the third of my wishes the chance to ask for three more wishes, and so on as long as I liked! Attachment to powers, similarly, can lead one to never-ending involvement.

3-39 | By loosening karmic bondage to the body, and by mental identification with a new one, one can enter into the body of another.

My Guru displayed this power constantly. He went into the bodies of each of his disciples every day. He said once, “It can be a terrible experience, if that person is suffering in delusion!” Once he said to someone, “You have a sour taste in your mouth, haven’t you?”

“How did you know?” she inquired.

“Because,” he answered, “I am as much in your body as I am in my own.”

People sometimes challenged him on the subject of sex. “How can you talk against it?” they asked. “You’ve never experienced its pleasure!”

“But I’ve been in the bodies of those who were experiencing it,” he answered, “and I know from experience that compared to divine bliss, the pleasure of sex is just *nothing*!”

He told us a fascinating story, which he said had really happened. A young man died, and his body was on the funeral pyre awaiting cremation, when an old yogi came out of the nearby jungle and cried, “Stop! I need that young body!”

At that moment he fell to the ground, and the young man, leaping off the pyre, ran off into the jungle. The young man’s relatives were left with the task of cremating the corpse of a

complete stranger! (Well, at least they had the satisfaction of knowing it was the corpse of a saint.)

Few people can manifest such a power, but every devotee can and should, through empathy and compassion, be sensitive to the needs of others—to their physical sufferings and their emotional hungers.

**3-40 | By mastery over *udana*—the current within the deep spine which raises Kundalini through the sushumna to the brain—one gains the power of levitation, and of leaving his body at will.**

Speaking scientifically, levitation is impossible. Yet in Christian countries, too, many saints have been observed in a state of levitation. Joseph of Cupertino was uniquely disqualified from working in the monastery kitchen by his tendency to rise up off the ground, and even to soar high above the monastery. Saint Teresa of Avila was greatly embarrassed by her body's tendency to levitate when she was at her prayers. Try as she would, however, to cling to her pew in church, her intense devotion lifted her body uncontrollably into the air.

How does levitation happen? When the *udana* current in the deep spine rises forcibly to the brain, it exerts sufficient outward force to lift the body, as well. The force of gravity cannot force it to remain rooted to the ground.

We must remember that matter, in itself, has no reality. Everything is a vibration of consciousness. When one's awareness passes beyond the material realm, the realities of this sphere of existence cease to hold sway.

**3-41 | Mastery over the *samana* (balancing) energy in the body gives off a bright radiance.**

A disciple of Swami Muktananda, a well-known yogi in India, told me that he had left his guru one evening, and was walking down a dark road. His guru sent a blazing light from his body that made the way clear for him as long as he needed it.

It is well known, of course, that saints have a bright aura of light around them. They can also control this emanation. Yogananda met a wandering sadhu, Kara Patri, at the Kumbha Mela in 1936. Years later he told us, “I hid from him” (so that Kara Patri might speak freely). His meaning was that he had withdrawn his aura so that Kara Patri would consider him an ordinary seeker.

### **3-42 | Samyama on the ear’s ability to hear and the *akasha* (subtle pre-space) gives one the ability to hear supernormally.**

Space itself, Yogananda taught, is a distinct vibration, separating the physical from the astral universe. Samyama on the connection between hearing and the subtle reality of pre-space (sometimes called the ether) grants one the ability to hear astrally.

### **3-43 | Samyama on the relationship between the physical body and pre-space (ether) gives the body the lightness of cotton fiber (the common expression today is, the lightness of a feather), and makes it possible to travel astrally.**

It is well for every devotee, regardless of whatever powers he may develop, to meditate on the non-existence of his body except as thought. One benefit to him will be that both physical and emotional pain will affect him much less, or indeed not at all. As for the ability to fly, levitate, or travel in his astral body, many accounts from the lives of saints testify to this ability.

Once, when I pleaded with Anandamayee Ma to come to

America, she replied, “I am there already!” Either she was referring to her spiritual omnipresence (the more likely explanation), or to her ability to move about astrally. Padre Pio, a great saint in south Italy, many times demonstrated this ability also, for example by travel to devotees of his in America.

3-44 | By samyama on the vrittis (eddies of attachment and desire) that are external to the body, bodilessness is attained, and the veil over the light of the Self is removed.

In seeing the subtle relation between that which is beyond the body and the body itself, one loses consciousness of the body.

3-45 | By samyama on the gross and subtle elements of the body, and on their essence and correlative purpose, one can master those elements.

3-46 | From (this realization) comes power over the animating principle and other siddhis (powers, or “perfections”), bodily perfection, and non-obstruction to the body’s functions (the eradication of all illness or disease).

The siddhis are listed as eight in number: *anima*, the power to become very small; *mahima*, to become very large; *laghima*, very light; *garima*, very heavy; *prapti*, the power to reach anywhere, even to the moon, and to pass unobstructed through anything; *prakamya*, the power to have any wish fulfilled; *isatva*, the power to create; *vasitva*, the ability to control everything.

One can have developed all the eight siddhis, however, and still

not have achieved final freedom in God. They are a temptation for the ego. Yogananda told the story of Baba Gorakhnath, a famous saint in northern India, whose spiritual power enabled him to live for three hundred years. When it was time for him to leave his body, he wanted to pass these powers on to a worthy recipient, and, through the spiritual eye, saw a young man seated in lotus posture on the banks of the Ganges. He materialized before this youth and solemnly announced, “I am Baba Gorakhnath.” Gorakhnath was very well known in his times; his manifestation might have stricken the much younger man with awe. It did not do so, however.

“So,” he replied, “what may I do for you?”

“Over a period of three hundred years I have developed all the eight siddhis of Patanjali. I have seen that the time has come for me to leave this body. I have also seen that you are a worthy recipient of these powers. I have condensed their essence into eight pellets of mud. You have but to hold these pellets in your right hand and meditate on their essence, and those powers will become absorbed into your being.”

“Are these mine, now, to do with as I will?”

“Yes! I have given them to you. I have no further use for them.”

The young man threw all the eight pellets into the flowing river, where they dissolved and disappeared.

“What have you done!” cried Baba Gorakhnath. “You have destroyed the fruit of my labors over three hundred years!”

“In delusion still, Baba Gorakhnath?” demanded the young man.

In that moment Baba realized his great mistake, and achieved complete soul-freedom.

### 3-47 | Beauty, grace, strength, and adamant muscles constitute bodily perfection.

At a Kumbha Mela I saw Deohara Baba, aged 144 years, standing on a platform, vigorously throwing a variety of fruits to persons in the assembled crowd—with all the vigor of a baseball pitcher!

Yogananda himself had extraordinary physical strength. One time at a lecture in Boston, he asked who in the audience would



volunteer to keep him pressed to the wall. Six burly policemen jumped up onto the lecture platform. Everyone present must have thought Yogananda would be bested! He asked them to keep his body pressed against the back wall.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

“Yeah!” they grunted fiercely.

He arched his back so strongly that all six men tumbled back into the orchestra pit!

Another thing is highly probable: A yogi will retain his vigor and magnetism to the end of life.

3-48 | Samyama on the power of sense perception, on its essential nature, and on its correlation to egoic awareness, brings control over the senses (to the extent of freeing sensory perception from dependence on the senses themselves).

3-49 | From that samyama, the body gains the power to move as quickly as thought; one gains the ability to function sensorily without recourse to the senses; and complete mastery over primordial Nature (Prakriti).

Someone who knew Yogananda when the Master was a young man told me the following story: “You should have seen him on the tennis court! Every time the ball landed on his side, and no matter how difficult the shot, he was there! I almost wondered if he wasn’t using spiritual power to accomplish that feat.”

I myself cannot imagine my Guru using spiritual power in a mere game, but who knows? He might have indulged it one time on a mere whim, or—more likely—he may have had some recondite reason for doing so, perhaps to help someone.

3-50 | By recognition of the distinction between sattwa (the mind in its pure state, without craving, attraction, or attachment) and the Self, one attains supremacy over all states of consciousness, and thereby becomes both omnipotent and omniscient.

Achieving oneness with God is not comparable to climbing a long, steep ladder. Once one overcomes one's own personal limitations, there is nothing more to conquer! We are as close to God, even now, as we'll ever be!

3-51 | By non-attachment even to the siddhis (powers), the seed of bondage is destroyed and supreme freedom is attained.

Once our bondage to ego is finally and completely snapped, there is nothing more to be attained. There are no outer kingdoms to conquer. We are supremely free!

3-52 | The yogi should neither accept nor preen himself over the (praise or) admiration of even celestial beings, as there is always a danger of falling back into what is undesirable (ego-consciousness).

My Guru used to say (and wrote in a poem to his guru, in *Whispers from Eternity*), "If all the gods protect me behind the parapets of their blessings, yet I receive not thy benedictions, I am an orphan left to pine spiritually in the ruins of thy displeasure."

Even the astral gods are not perfect; they still have some ego-bondage to sever.

But I have known enlightened beings here on earth, also, who have given me advice that conflicted with what my Guru had told

me. I remained firm in my obedience and loyalty to him. Many are even the true paths to God. I have chosen mine.

### 3-53 | Samyama on single sequential moments gives discrimination.

Again, here, what Patanjali is teaching is to go to the heart of whatever is being considered. One cannot really understand anything by nosing about its periphery.

### 3-54 | Thus, apparently indistinguishable differences between objects that are of the same species, that show the same characteristics, and that live in the same locality become distinguishable from one another.

I mentioned earlier this quote from *Autobiography of a Yogi*: “Every atom is dowered with individuality.” A thing or a person may be identical, in appearance, to some other—as happens sometimes with twins—but clear intuition, which perceives things at their essence, will penetrate to the uniqueness of each.

### 3-55 | Discriminative insight is that which simultaneously comprehends everything in every situation; it is pure intuition, which leads to liberation.

True discrimination is the intuition mentioned in the last sutra.

### 3-56 | When the tranquil mind attains purity

## **equal to that of the Self, one attains Absoluteness.**

When the mind becomes tranquil, it goes beyond thought and perceives the Self, becoming one with it. From here it is not even “a hop, a skip, and a jump” to the Absolute. One is there already!

The following words are excerpted from Yogananda’s poem, “Samadhi,” as it appears in *Autobiography of a Yogi*:

*Myself, in everything, enters the Great Myself.  
Gone forever, fitful, flickering shadows of mortal memory.  
Spotless is my mental sky, below, ahead, and high above.  
Eternity and I, one united ray.  
A tiny bubble of laughter, I  
Am become the Sea of Mirth Itself.*

*End of Third Pada*

# Kaivalya Pada

## THE FOURTH BOOK

### *On Absoluteness*

4-1 | Siddhis are born of practices performed in previous lives, or of the ingestion of certain herbs, or by the repetition of certain mantras, or by pain-enduring tapasya (self-denial), or by samadhi (oneness with God).

Now why, in the last book of this great scripture, are we back again on this subject? It's exasperating! I can only think that these issues, in Patanjali's day, must have been important!

1. Obviously, a person's activities in previous lives would influence his abilities in this life. This point seems hardly necessary to make.

2. Siddhis come through the ingestion of certain herbs. We today know of marijuana, "sacred" mushrooms, and the chemical LSD. There may have been others in those days. Since this is the only item newly introduced here, I cannot but think this sutra was written mainly for its inclusion. I have had plenty of experience in my life with people who took these "certain herbs." Not that I have ever tried them, personally. But I have seen their effects on others.

My first experience was on Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, when I was twenty. It was in a hall containing about fifty people. Someone from New York was touting marijuana. "It isn't habit forming," he insisted, and raved about how wonderful it made you feel. He

passed a marijuana cigarette around. I think I was the only person present who was not interested in even trying it. My impression of the others in the room was that they seemed on a very personal “high” that had nothing to do with any reality, whether higher or lower. It seemed to cut them adrift from anything objective.

In later years, a saint I met used to say, “Your religion must be tested in the cold light of day.” By that standard, the cigarette being smoked that day divorced its users from “the cold light of day.”

In 1960, in India, I attended a Kumbha Mela, which is a religious fair with a distinctly Indian flair. I remember stopping by a group of *naga*, or naked, sadhus, sitting on the sand and smoking *bhang*, which is a variety of marijuana, or cannabis. Perhaps they did so as protection against the cold, since marijuana dulls the senses, but it was quite obvious that they took it also for the pleasure it gave them. They were wearing broad smiles of delight, and I couldn’t help thinking, “This is a happiness they can’t share with any except those who join them in their puffs.”

In the 1960s, when San Francisco was what might be called the world capital of hippiedom, I lived in that city myself. I never tried the hallucinatory drugs, although people all around me were “enjoying” them, but my own experience was that when others did so in my presence, I felt a satanic presence in the room. The “high” they experienced had nothing to do with making them better human beings. They became completely centered in themselves. They spoke of feeling love for everyone, but I noticed it was love for those only who shared their own misty experience. I also had the impression that, if someone were to stab me in the chest, what they would have loved about me was the beautiful red color on my shirt. It was, in other words, completely ego-centered. Moreover, from the impression I received over time, it had a weakening impact on their will power.

In 1968 I began the first Ananda community. “Communes” were the “in” thing in those days, which probably aided Ananda’s initial success, but we had plenty of newcomers who believed in taking drugs. I made a rule against drugs, and they took it as a rule against taking drugs “on the property.” What I noticed about those people was that they could never see any point of view but their own. It was quite impossible to create a cooperative community with them. Thank God we had others joining, too. Finally, when these were in the majority, I forced a house clearing. I didn’t like to do it, for my

way of leadership is to view my role as being one of service to people. But there are times in life when one must be strong. I simply gave them a choice: “If you decide to go that way, I will leave.” And, of course, I knew I had the majority on my side!

Did someone introduce this bit into Patanjali? I am willing to think so. Herbs may induce visions, but they cannot make a person virtuous. And the visions are most likely pure hallucinations. At least, I never heard the slightest hint of wisdom coming from people who took those herbs.

3. The repetition of certain mantras does bestow certain powers, but, again, if one does not also purify *himself*, those powers will serve him little. This was what Buddha had against *karmakand*, or rituals to gain certain powers.

4. Tapasya has been explained before. By preventing the body’s energy from being scattered, one can certainly acquire powers, though these will be of limited effectiveness.

5. The only valid portion of this sutra is the fifth, about samadhi. Naturally, when you have realized God’s one presence everywhere, you have the power to change the dream itself.

## 4-2 | The transformation of one species into another is brought about by the flow of Prakriti (Primordial Nature).

The question is, how did Nature produce so many different species? The answer is that Nature herself is in constant flux. *Panta rhei*, as the ancient Greeks put it: “All is flux.

Divine bliss itself is ever-new.

4-3 | Incidental qualities do not affect a person’s spiritual nature; they must simply be removed, as a farmer removes obstacles to a flow of water.

4-4 | (Once a great yogi has attained *nirbikalpa samadhi*) his enlightened consciousness can produce (in visions) several of his past memories together.

My Guru explained this truth. Without his explanation, I doubt that this sutra would have made any sense to me.

He said that what happens, when one attains *nirbikalpa* and, thereby, freedom from all ego-identity, is that he can go through more than one life's memories at a time. He can produce, in vision, several past ego-identities at a time, and realize all of them simultaneously as nothing but expressions of God, not the activities of his ego here on earth. Thus, he can work through the karma of many past lives in a single meditation.

4-5 | Although the actions of those many bodies may differ widely, his original chitta, or primordial feeling, remains the same.

In other words, he is simply the observer. Nothing causes in him the slightest ego-born reaction.

4-6 | Although, in those meditations, he perceive many personalities, he himself remains untouched by any latent impression of past karma from those lives, and by any past craving and attachment.

In his *nirbikalpa* state, he can observe the actions of his past lives without being even slightly affected by them.

4-7 | The actions of a true yogi are neither good nor bad



(white nor black), even though actions which proceed from ego-awareness are of three kinds: good, bad, and mixed.

In those past lives, he will have committed many wrongs from which the sattvic mind today would cringe, and many good deeds for which, today, he would be grateful. But the good, bad, and mixed deeds that impeded his own path are no longer remembered by his (now-dead) ego. Therefore they touch him not.

4-8 | Of ego-motivated acts, only those vasanas (subconscious impressions) for which present conditions are favorable bear karmic fruit in (any particular incarnation).

If, in some past life, you drowned someone in the ocean, but in this lifetime you have lived your whole life in the mountains, your karma will catch up with you still, but in this case it may have to wait until some future life. In these ways, too, a yogi in *nirbikalpa samadhi* sees the eventual perfection of the working of the law of karma.

4-9 | Though memories are individualized according to class, locality, and time, the impressions they leave are the same.

In the state of *nirbikalpa samadhi*, one's memories of the past, though specific in themselves, do not linger on in consciousness as stronger or weaker impressions, for there is no ego left to reinforce those reactions.

#### 4-10 | Since the desire to live is eternal, those impressions have no beginning.

In that high state of consciousness, those past impressions do not intrude themselves as having had any moment of initial impact.

#### 4-11 | The characteristics of personality, being held together by impact and reaction, desire and attachment, disappear upon the cessation of these four.

Our personalities are not our own—much less so, in fact, than our egos are our own.

Every living being is a unique expression of the Infinite. In the plant, however, the life-force manifested in that form has no egoic reality. For it to have that, it would need to have acquired self-definition, memories, individual traits. It has none of these. Still less has it any memory of past reactions (except very vaguely), desires (except as a sort of life impulse), or attachments. Despite the fact that the ego is the greatest obstacle on the spiritual path, it is also the “incarcerated” soul’s greatest need and blessing, if it is ever to reach the point in its outward evolution even to set foot on the spiritual path with conscious yearning.

#### 4-12 | Past and future exist not only subjectively, but objectively, because of countless differences among the beings involved.

What a *jivan mukta*, who has attained *nirbikalpa samadhi*, sees of his past has (virtually) no impact on the future, for many people’s lives are involved and not only his own. He may remember, for instance, having once started a forest fire that destroyed many homes. He can see, in his own understanding, that that deed was actually perpetrated by God Himself, in the vastness of His great

dream, but the knowledge doesn't alter the effects on others of that deed. He cannot truly expiate, in other words, the sin of having started that fire. He can only achieve freedom from the burden which has darkened his own past karma.

#### 4-13 | Whether manifested or latent, these characteristics belong to the nature of the gunas.

The three gunas are everywhere present, indicating as they do only degrees of outward manifestation, away from Spirit. Even sattwa guna, albeit the good quality, is still a quality and therefore separate from the undifferentiated Spirit.

#### 4-14 | Since the gunas work together in all things, there is a unity in them all.

All things, being only close, farther, and farthest from their essential reality in Spirit Itself, have a certain unity in this simple fact. A pair of scissors and a human being are united in this fact. Two human beings, one a criminal and the other a saint, are similarly so united. A criminal may have longer to wander in delusion, but he, no less than the saint, is a manifestation of the same God.

#### 4-15 | Owing to differences in various minds, perception of the same object may vary.

A child of two may consider his six-foot-tall father huge, but a seven-foot-tall basketball player may refer to that same man as "shorty." To a compulsive shoplifter, someone who only occasionally burgles homes may seem relatively honest, but to most

of us they both look like thieves. Relativity, in this world, is simply a reality.

**4-16 | Nor does the existence of anything depend on the perception of a single mind.**

Obviously, then, the reality of objective existence is an objective reality. It is not dismissed by *nirbikalpa* itself.

**4-17 | An object is known or unknown depending on the degree to which the mind accepts it.**

Moods can make one deny the existence of something in objective reality, but denial does not change the fact of its existence. *Nirbikalpa* is “uncolored” by any mood or prejudice, and therefore sees everything as it is.

**4-18 | Because the Atman is unchangeable, the vrittis of chitta are always known to it.**

When you stand on a riverbank, you can observe clearly the whirls and eddies in the flowing water beneath you. If you were caught in one of those little vortices, however, your perception would become distorted. Only when the primordial feelings are not agitated by desires and attachments can you perceive anything in life clearly.

**4-19 | The mind is not self-luminous, for it is perceptible**

from without.

The knowledge that we exist comes to us from within, but awareness that we think is perceivable to others. Therefore, the *thinking* mind is not self-luminous. Our thoughts are not our own, but are rooted in the infinite. According to the level of consciousness on which we live, the thoughts we attract to us will be coarse, refined, or somewhere in between. Our level of consciousness depends on where our energy is centered in the spine.

**4-20 | The individual mind cannot both perceive and be perceived, simultaneously.**

4-21 | If the complete cognition of one mind by another were possible, one would have to postulate an infinite number of such cognizing minds, resulting in a mixture of memories.

Such perfect cognition is possible only in the Atman, the one Source of all awareness.

4-22 | The consciousness of the Self never changes, but when its reflection appears in the mind, the mind is illuminated with individual intelligence.

It is like reflections of the one moon in many pots of water. The moon reflected there is one and the same, but the individual reflections may vary according to the size of the pot, the color of the water, and whether wind is blowing on the water. So, although

all of us are animated by the same divine consciousness, many factors affect the manifestation of that consciousness in each one of us: our good, bad, and upwardly or downwardly activating qualities; the clarity of our intelligence; our desires and attachments; the strength of our dependence on ego, etc.

4-23 | The chitta understands everything according to how it is affected by its own nature and by what it sees.

Primordial feeling, colored by who is seeing and by what is seen, reacts accordingly. That feeling is the true determiner of our degree of awareness. If a bitter taste affects one negatively, its perception of that object (a fruit?) will be negative.

4-24 | Desires and attachments exist for another (the ego), for they cannot act except in association with it.

Who desires? Who feels attachment? The ego, only. Without ego, neither desire nor attachment could exist.

4-25 | For one who can distinguish between the mind and the Self, thoughts in the mind cease completely.

The mind is only a reflection of the more distant-seeming, indwelling Self, or soul, which never acts directly in the body. Thus, when one sees beyond the thinking process to the silent observer within, the Self, the mind's fluctuations cease completely to exist.

4-26 | When the chitta (primordial feeling) is drawn

toward discrimination, it gravitates toward  
Absoluteness.

Upward-feeling devotion is in fact the first essential on the spiritual path. Swami Sri Yukteswar, whom Paramhansa Yogananda called India's gyanavatar (incarnation of wisdom) for this age, stated that until the heart's natural love has been developed, one cannot set even one foot before the other in one's search for God.

It is like living next door to the most famous restaurant in the whole world. You may know its full menu, its fame, the excellence of its cooks, but until you yourself are hungry you will not go in and eat.

There are too many hypothetical seekers on the spiritual path who prefer to dabble in useless theories, who love complicated intellectual definitions, and whose greatest pleasure lies in abstract discussion. They will never find God, for all that interests them is mind games.

4-27 | As one is developing true perception, distracting thoughts may arise in the mind owing to past impressions.

We should be careful to avoid the useless "fillers" with which the mind loves to fiddle: television, radio, the temptation to phone everyone and his brother on a mobile phone, etc. I was in a barber shop in the city of Rome a few years ago, and had no choice but to be at least aware of the television set blaring away hardly a foot away from me. I myself never watch TV, which I consider a useless distraction. This one, however, commanded attention! What I noticed about it particularly was that the scene changed *every two seconds*! That's how long people's attention span was expected to last! Do try to overcome the noxious habit of polluting your mind with such garbage.

4-28 | Distractions can be removed, as has been discussed before (see Book II, 1, 2, 10, 11, and 26): above all, by meditation and resolving the mind back to its source.

Distractions can be removed, and one can tread the spiritual path with greater resolution.

**4-29 | The yogi who has no self-interest in personal attainment (who seeks God for no other reward than the simple gift of loving Him) achieves perfect virtue.**

In this state there is no ego-motivation of any kind.

There is a beautiful story on this point from the life of Sri Chaitanya. Several disciples of his were asking, “When shall I find God.” Inspired that day to answer this question, he answered some of them, “In this life. . . . After two more lives. . . . In the next life.” His closest disciple then asked him, “Master, when shall I find God?”

To everyone’s shock and dismay, Chaitanya replied, “After a million more lives.”

The disciples were so saddened by this answer that no one dared ask any more questions that day.

After some time, someone noticed this closest disciple dancing with joy on the balcony outside their meeting room. Someone went over to him and asked with deep concern, “Brother, didn’t you just hear what the Master told you?”

“Yes, Brother, dance with me in my joy! He promised me I would find God. Who cares about the little detail of how long it will take?”

The disciples reported this answer to Chaitanya, who smiled blissfully and said, “I just wanted you all to understand the right attitude for a true devotee of God!” With that, he summoned this closest disciple, slapped him with divine power on the chest, and in



that instant the disciple realized God!

4-30 | In complete absence of self-interest, all afflictions and past karmas cease.

When the ego has been destroyed in *nirbikalpa samadhi*, one becomes a *jivan mukta*, or “freed while living.” This is not the state of final freedom, but in this state, in the total and permanent absence of ego-consciousness, one is removed from all further suffering.

4-31 | Then all the coverings (of ignorance) and impurities are removed entirely. In this state of omniscience, what remains unknown (through the senses) becomes insignificant and negligible.

Any sensory information one needs can be one’s own by merely concentrating on it.

4-32 | At this point, the gunas cease to serve their purpose; they have been transcended.

The three gunas are degrees of distance from God. When one’s consciousness merges in God, he becomes “*triguna rahitam*,” beyond all the three gunas.

4-33 | The sequences of transformation end, and, with that ending, time itself ceases to exist.

Time is only a product of the consciousness of change. When change ends, time itself ceases to be.

4-34 | Thus one attains the supreme state of freedom,  
when the gunas reabsorb themselves into Prakriti,  
having no more purpose for serving the Purusha. Or, to  
put it differently, the power of consciousness withdraws  
into its own nature.

*End of Fourth Pada*

# Glossary

**ahankara**—ego.

**ahimsa**—harmlessness.

**akasha**—the ether, or subtle pre-space.

**asana**—the correct posture for meditation: sitting motionless with a straight, upright spine.

**Ashtanga Yoga**—the “eight-limbed” yoga as taught by Patanjali: consisting of yama; niyama; asana; pranayama; pratyahara; dharana; dhyana; and samadhi.

**Atman**—the immortal, changeless, divine Self.

**AUM**—the cosmic sound vibration that made possible the manifestation of the universe.

**avatar**—a divine incarnation.

**brahmacharya**—“flowing with Brahma”; self-control, continence.

**Brahma**—one of the three vibrations of AUM: God the Creator.

**Brahman**—the Supreme Spirit.

**buddhi**—intellect.

**chakras**—the subtle energy centers in the spine and brain.

**chitta**—the faculty of feeling.

**dharana**—concentration.

**dhyana**—meditation: concentration on higher aspects of reality.

**gunas**—the three qualities of outward manifestation: sattwa (qualities that uplift the mind); rajas (activating qualities); and tamas (qualities that lower the mind).

**guru**—a Self-realized saint who, acting as a divine instrument, guides his disciples to the realization of God.

**Hatha Yoga**—a system of healthful bodily postures.

**idā**—See *naḍis*

**ishtadevata**—a devotee’s chosen form of God.

**Ishwara**—the Supreme Self.

**jivan mukta**—a spiritually liberated soul: freed while living.

**Kumbha Mela**—a spiritual festival in India.

**Kurukshetra**—a war in ancient India in which the royal Pandavas, guided by Krishna, defeated their cousins, the Kauravas. This war is the central theme of the Indian scripture, Mahabharata.

**mantra**—a word or phrase which, when repeated verbally or mentally, draws

one into a state of inner communion.

**maya**—delusion.

**moksha**—final, complete liberation: freedom from rebirth.

**mon**—mind

**naḍis**—the two subtle nerve channels in the spine, called the iḍa and the pingala.

**nishkam karma**—action without desire for the fruits of action.

**niyamas**— the Do's of right spiritual action.

**param mukta**—a completely liberated being.

**pingala**—See naḍis

**Prakriti**—Nature.

**Pralayas**—a great destruction in Nature (such as a planet, a galaxy, the universe, etc.).

**pranayama**—energy or life-force control.

**pratyahara**—interiorization of the mind; withdrawal of life-force from the senses.

**Purusha**—the true Self, or Supreme Spirit.

**samadhi**—the state of oneness with God, of which there are several stages, including: AUM samadhi—oneness with the infinite Cosmic Vibration, through which one perceives all Creation as consisting of innumerable vibrations of AUM; *sabikalpa* (or *sampragyata*) samadhi—conditioned oneness, in which some trace of ego remains (from which one might say “I” have achieved this state”); *nirbikalpa* (or *asampragyata*) samadhi—unconditioned oneness, or final enlightenment, where the “I” has become identified with the Absolute Spirit.

**samyama**—attunement with, or absorption in.

**santosa**—contentment.

**Satchidananda**—a name for God that describes Him as “ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new bliss.”

**Shankhya**—one of the three main “philosophical systems” of India, which explains *why* one should seek God.

**Shiva**—one of the three vibrations of AUM: God the Destroyer.

**siddhis**—supra-physical powers.

**swadhyaya**—introspection, Self-awareness.

**Vedanta**—one of the three main “philosophical systems” of India, which describes the nature of God (*what* God is).

**Vishnu**—one of the three vibrations of AUM: God the Preserver.

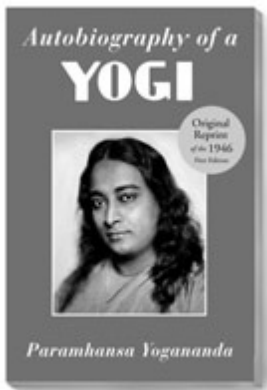
**vrittis**—eddies or vortices of attachment and desire.

**yamas**—the Don't's of right spiritual action.

**yoga**—literally “union”; one of the three main “philosophical systems” of India, which explains *how* one can realize God.



# Further Explorations with Crystal Clarity



*The original 1946 unedited edition of Yogananda's spiritual masterpiece  
Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramhansa Yogananda*

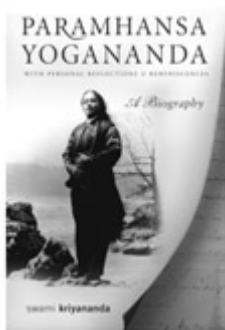
*Autobiography of a Yogi* is one of the best-selling Eastern philosophy titles of all time, with millions of copies sold, and named one of the best and most influential books of the twentieth century. This highly prized reprinting of the original 1946 edition is the only one available free from textual changes made after Yogananda's death. Yogananda was the first yoga master of India whose mission was to live and teach in the West.

In this updated edition are bonus materials, including a last chapter that Yogananda wrote in 1951, without posthumous changes. This new edition also includes the eulogy that Yogananda wrote for Gandhi, and a new foreword and afterword by Swami Kriyananda, one of Yogananda's close,

direct disciples.

This edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi* is also available in unabridged audiobook (MP3) format, read by Swami Kriyananda.

*"In the original edition, published during Yogananda's life, one is more in contact with Yogananda himself. While Yogananda founded centers and organizations, his concern was more with guiding individuals to direct communion with Divinity rather than with promoting any one church as opposed to another. This spirit is easier to grasp in the original edition of this great spiritual and yogic classic."* —**David Frawley**, Director, American Institute of Vedic Studies, author of *Yoga and Ayurveda*



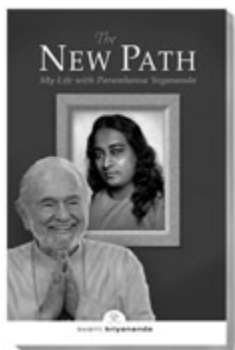
## Paramhansa Yogananda

A Biography with Personal Reflections and Reminiscences  
by Swami Kriyananda

Paramhansa Yogananda's classic *Autobiography of a Yogi* is more about the saints Yogananda met than about himself—in spite of the fact that Yogananda was much greater than many he described. In this biography, one of Yogananda's closest, direct disciples relates the untold story of this great spiritual master and world teacher: his teenage miracles, his challenges in coming to America, his national lecture campaigns, his struggles to fulfill his world-changing mission amid incomprehension and painful betrayals, and his ultimate triumphant achievement. Kriyananda's subtle grasp of his guru's inner nature reveals Yogananda's many-sided greatness. Includes many never-before-published anecdotes.

*"Swami Kriyananda's biography is a welcome addition to the growing literature on Paramhansa Yogananda. I especially like the author's chapter on Yogananda's legacy where he quotes Yogananda on his concept of 'world brotherhood colonies.' I am astounded to find that a consciousness-based theory of evolution predicts the evolutionary necessity of such colonies. Yogananda was a true seer and indeed, his words 'shall not die.'"*

—**Amit Goswami**, PhD, quantum physicist and author of *The Self-Aware Universe*, *Creative*



## The New Path

My Life with Paramhansa Yogananda  
Swami Kriyananda

**Winner of the 2010 Eric Hoffer Award for Best Self-Help/Spiritual Book**

**Winner of the 2010 USA Book News Award for Best Spiritual Book**

This is the moving story of Kriyananda's years with Paramhansa Yogananda, India's emissary to the West and the first yoga master to spend the greater part of his life in America. When Swami Kriyananda discovered *Autobiography of a Yogi* in 1948, he was totally new to Eastern teachings. This is a great advantage to the Western reader, since Kriyananda walks us along the yogic path as he discovers it from the moment of his initiation as a disciple of Yogananda. With winning honesty, humor, and deep insight, he shares his journey on the spiritual path through personal stories and experiences.

Through more than four hundred stories of life with Yogananda, we tune in more deeply to this great master and to the teachings he brought to the West. This book is an ideal complement to *Autobiography of a Yogi*. "Reading *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Yogananda was a transformative experience for me and for millions of others. In *The New Path*, Kriyananda carries on this great tradition. Highly recommended".

—**Dean Ornish, MD**, Founder and President, Preventative Medicine Research Institute, Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco, author of *The Spectrum*

"Completely revised and updated, *The New Path* is filled with profound reflections, insights, experiences, challenges, and spiritual wisdom. Required reading for every spiritual seeker. I heartily recommend it."

—**Michael Toms**, Founder, New Dimensions Media, and author of *True Work* and *An Open*

*Life: Joseph Campbell in Conversation with Michael Toms*

Also available in unabridged audiobook (MP3) format



## The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita

Explained by Paramhansa Yogananda

*As Remembered by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

Rarely in a lifetime does a new spiritual classic appear that has the power to change people's lives and transform future generations. This is such a book.

This revelation of India's best-loved scripture approaches it from a fresh perspective, showing its deep allegorical meaning and its down-to-earth practicality. The themes presented are universal: how to achieve victory in life in union with the divine; how to prepare for life's "final exam," death, and what happens afterward; how to triumph over all pain and suffering.

*"It is doubtful that there has been a more important spiritual writing in the last fifty years than this soul-stirring, monumental work. What a gift! What a treasure!"*

—Neale Donald Walsch, author of *Conversations with God*

Also available in unabridged audiobook (MP3) format.





## Revelations of Christ

Proclaimed by Paramhansa Yogananda

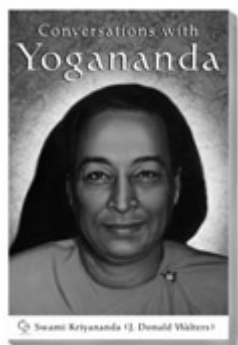
*Presented by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

The rising tide of alternative beliefs proves that now, more than ever, people are yearning for a clear-minded and uplifting understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

This galvanizing book, presenting the teachings of Christ from the experience and perspective of Paramhansa Yogananda, one of the greatest spiritual masters of the twentieth century, finally offers the fresh perspective on Christ's teachings for which the world has been waiting. This work offers us an opportunity to understand and apply the scriptures in a more reliable way than any other: by studying under those saints who have communed directly, in deep ecstasy, with Christ and God.

*"Kriyananda's revelatory book gives us the enlightened, timeless wisdom of Jesus the Christ in a way that addresses the challenges of twenty-first-century living."* —**Michael Beckwith**, founder and Spiritual Director, Agape International Spiritual Center, author of *Inspirations of the Heart*

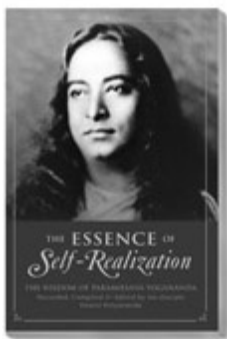
Also available in unabridged audiobook (MP3) format.



## Conversations with Yogananda

*Recorded, Compiled, and Edited with commentary  
by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

Here is an unparalleled, firsthand account of the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda. Featuring nearly 500 never-before-released stories, sayings, and insights, this is an extensive, yet eminently accessible treasure trove of wisdom from one of the 20th century's most famous yoga masters. Compiled and edited with commentary by Swami Kriyananda, one of Yogananda's closest direct disciples.



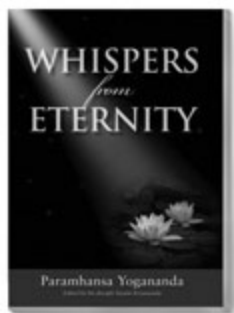
## The Essence of Self-Realization

*The Wisdom of Paramhansa Yogananda  
Recorded, Compiled, and Edited by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

With nearly three hundred sayings rich with spiritual wisdom, this book is the fruit of a labor of love. A glance at the table of contents will convince

the reader of the vast scope of this work. It offers as complete an explanation of life's true purpose, and of the way to achieve that purpose, as may be found anywhere.

Also available in unabridged audiobook (MP3) format.



## Whispers from Eternity

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

*Edited by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

Many poetic works can inspire, but few, like this one, have the power to change your life. Yogananda was not only a spiritual master, but a master poet, whose verses revealed the hidden divine presence behind even everyday things. This book has the power to rapidly accelerate your spiritual growth, and provides hundreds of delightful ways for you to begin your own conversation with God.

Also available in unabridged audiobook (MP3) format.

### ~ The WISDOM of YOGANANDA Series ~

This series features writings of Paramhansa Yogananda not available elsewhere—including many from his earliest years in America—in an approachable, easy-to-read format. The words of the Master are presented with minimal editing, to capture his expansive and compassionate wisdom, his sense of fun, and his practical guidance.



## How to Be Happy All the Time

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, VOLUME 1

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Yogananda powerfully explains virtually everything needed to lead a happier, more fulfilling life. Topics include: looking for happiness in the right places; choosing to be happy; tools and techniques for achieving happiness; sharing happiness; balancing success and happiness; and many more.

*"The most important condition for happiness is even-mindedness, and here [Yogananda] brings some of this sense to a treatise on how to be happy under virtually any condition. [This book] is a fine starting point for reaching contentment."* —**Bookwatch**



## Karma and Reincarnation

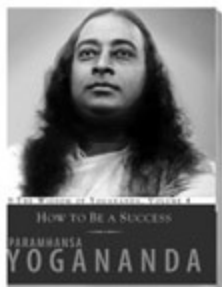
The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, VOLUME 2

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Yogananda reveals the truth behind karma, death, reincarnation, and the afterlife. With clarity and simplicity, he makes the mysterious understandable. Topics include: why we see a world of suffering and

inequality; how to handle the challenges in our lives; what happens at death, and after death; and the purpose of reincarnation.

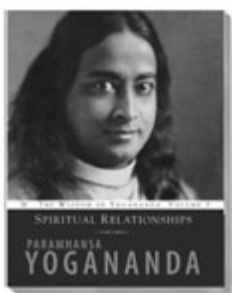
*"Explains more clearly, and from a higher perspective, what happens when we die and afterwards, than any other book I've seen."* —**Richard Salva**, author of *The Reincarnation of Abraham Lincoln*



## How to Be a Success

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, VOLUME 4  
*Paramhansa Yogananda*

This book includes the complete text of *The Attributes of Success*, the original booklet later published as *The Law of Success*. In addition, you will learn how to find your purpose in life, develop habits of success, eradicate habits of failure, develop will power and magnetism, and thrive in the right job.



## Spiritual Relationships

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, VOLUME 3  
*Paramhansa Yogananda*

This book contains practical guidance and fresh insight on relationships of all types. Topics include: how to cure bad habits that can end true friendship; how to choose the right partner; sex in marriage and how to conceive a spiritual child; problems that arise in marriage; the Universal Love behind all your relationships.

*“[A] thoroughly ‘user friendly’ guide on how yoga principles can actually help relationships grow and thrive. Yogananda’s keys to understanding yoga’s underlying philosophy [teach] how to cure bad habits, expand love’s boundaries, and understand relationship problems.”*

—James A. Cox, Chief Editor, *The Bookwatch*



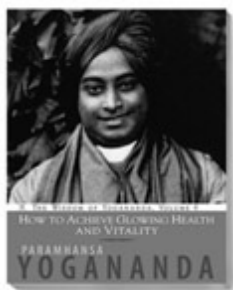
## How to Have Courage, Calmness and Confidence

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, VOLUME 5

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

***Winner of the 2011 International Book Award for Best Self-Help Title***

This book shows you how to transform your life. Dislodge negative thoughts and depression. Uproot fear and thoughts of failure. Cure nervousness and systematically eliminate worry from your life. Overcome anger, sorrow, over-sensitivity, and a host of other troublesome emotional responses; and much more.



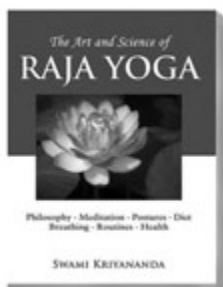
## How to Achieve Glowing Health and Vitality

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, VOLUME 6

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Paramhansa Yogananda offers practical, wide-ranging, and fascinating suggestions on how to have more energy and live a radiantly healthy life. The principles in this book promote physical health and all-round well-being, mental clarity, and ease and inspiration in your spiritual life.

Readers will discover the priceless Energization Exercises for rejuvenating the body and mind, the fine art of conscious relaxation, and helpful diet tips for health and beauty.



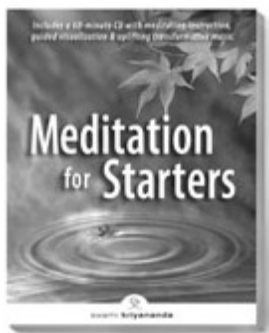
## The Art and Science of Raja Yoga

*Swami Kriyananda*

This book contains fourteen lessons in which the original yoga science emerges in all its glory—a proven system for realizing one's spiritual destiny. This is the most comprehensive course available on yoga and meditation today. Over 450 pages of text and photos give you a complete

and detailed presentation of yoga postures, yoga philosophy, affirmations, meditation instruction, and breathing practices.

Also included are suggestions for daily yoga routines, information on proper diet, recipes, and alternative healing techniques.



## Meditation for Starters

*Swami Kriyananda*

Have you wanted to learn to meditate, but just never gotten around to it? Or tried “sitting in the silence”, only to find yourself too restless to stay more than a few moments? If so, *Meditation for Starters* is just what you’ve been looking for—and with a companion CD, it provides everything you need to begin a meditation practice.

Filled with easy-to-follow instructions, beautiful guided visualizations, and answers to important questions on meditation, the book includes: what meditation is (and isn’t); how to relax your body and prepare yourself for going within; and techniques for interiorizing and focusing the mind.





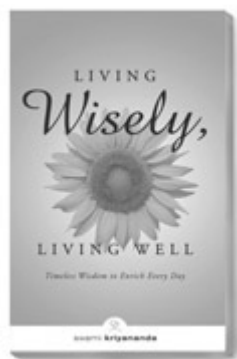
# Awaken to Superconsciousness

Swami Kriyananda

This popular guide includes everything you need to know about the philosophy and practice of meditation, and how to apply the meditative mind to resolve common daily conflicts in uncommon, superconscious ways.

Superconsciousness is the hidden mechanism at work behind intuition, spiritual and physical healing, successful problem solving, and finding deep and lasting joy.

*"A brilliant, thoroughly enjoyable guide to the art and science of meditation. [Swami Kriyananda] entertains, informs, and inspires—his enthusiasm for the subject is contagious. This book is a joy to read from beginning to end."* —**Yoga International**



## Living Wisely, Living Well

Swami Kriyananda

*Winner of the 2011 International Book Award for Best Self-Help: Motivational Title*

Want to transform your life? Tap into your highest potential? Get inspired, uplifted, and motivated?

*Living Wisely, Living Well* contains 366 practical ways to improve your life—a thought for each day of the year. Each reading is warm with wisdom, alive with positive expectation, and provides simple actions that bring profound results. See life with new eyes. Discover hundreds of techniques for self-improvement.

*"A great book. I love reading it at the start of each morning, to set a positive tone for the*

rest of the day. Highly recommended!” —Joe Begley, meditation instructor



## The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam Explained

*Paramhansa Yogananda, edited by Swami Kriyananda*

The *Rubaiyat* is loved by Westerners as a hymn of praise to sensual delights. In the East its quatrains are considered a deep allegory of the soul's romance with God, based solely on the author Omar Khayyam's reputation as a sage and mystic. But for centuries the meaning of this famous poem has remained a mystery. Now Paramhansa Yogananda reveals the secret meaning and the “golden spiritual treasures” hidden behind the *Rubaiyat*'s verses—and presents a new scripture to the world.

*“The most enchanting reading experience I've had in a decade.”*

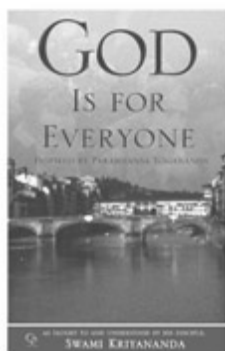
—Dr. Wayne Dyer, author of *The Shift*, *Wishes Fulfilled*, *I am*, and *The Power of Intention*



## The Bhagavad Gita

According to Paramhansa Yogananda  
*Edited by Swami Kriyananda*

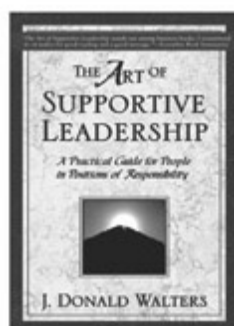
Based on the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda, this translation of the Gita brings alive the deep spiritual insights and poetic beauty of the famous battlefield dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. Based on the little-known truth that each character in the Gita represents an aspect of our own being, it expresses with revelatory clarity how to win the struggle within us between the forces of our lower and higher natures.



## God Is for Everyone

Inspired by Paramhansa Yogananda  
*Swami Kriyananda*

This book presents a concept of God and spiritual meaning that will broadly appeal to everyone, from the most uncertain agnostic to the most fervent believer. Clearly and simply written, thoroughly nonsectarian and nondogmatic in its approach, it is the perfect introduction to the spiritual path. Yogananda's core teachings are presented by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda.



# The Art of Supportive Leadership

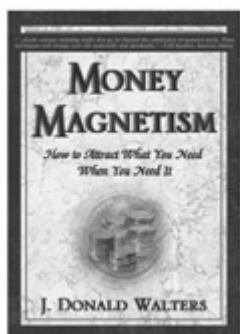
A Practical Guide for People in Positions of Responsibility

*J. Donald Walters (Swami Kriyananda)*

You can learn to be a more effective leader by viewing leadership in terms of shared accomplishments rather than personal advancement. Drawn from timeless Eastern wisdom, this book is clear, concise, and practical—designed to produce results quickly and simply.

Used in training seminars in the U.S., Europe, and India, this book gives practical advice for leaders and potential leaders to help increase effectiveness, creativity, and team building. Individual entrepreneurs, corporations such as Kellogg, military and police personnel, and nonprofit organizations are using this approach.

*“We’ve been casting about for something like this for a long time. This book is very practical, very readable, and concise. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.” —Kellogg Corporation*



## Money Magnetism

How to Attract What You Need When You Need It

*J. Donald Walters (Swami Kriyananda)*

This book can change your life by transforming how you think and feel about money. According to the author, anyone can attract wealth: “There need be no limits to the flow of your abundance.” Through numerous true stories and examples, Swami Kriyananda vividly—sometimes humorously—shows you how and why the principles of money magnetism work, and how you can immediately start applying them to achieve greater success in your material and your spiritual life.

*“Money Magnetism will help you take charge of your life. True abundance—of both the material and spiritual kind—can be found through the wisdom of this small but powerful book.”* **John Ernst**, Richland Financial Services



## CRYSTAL CLARITY PUBLISHERS

Crystal Clarity Publishers offers many additional resources to assist you in your spiritual journey, including many other books, a wide variety of inspirational and relaxation music composed by Swami Kriyananda, and yoga and meditation videos. To request a catalog, to place an order for the above products, or for more information, please contact us at:

Crystal Clarity Publishers / [www.crystalclarity.com](http://www.crystalclarity.com)

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EMAIL: [clarity@crystalclarity.com](mailto:clarity@crystalclarity.com)

*For our online catalog, complete with secure ordering, please visit our website.*

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## ANANDA WORLDWIDE

Ananda Sangha, a worldwide organization founded by Swami Kriyananda, offers spiritual support and resources based on the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda. There are Ananda spiritual communities in Nevada City, Sacramento, Palo Alto, and Los Angeles, California; Seattle, Washington; and Portland and Laurelwood, Oregon; as well as a retreat center and European community in Assisi, Italy, and communities near New Delhi and Pune, India. Ananda supports more than 140 meditation groups worldwide.

*For more information about Ananda Sangha, communities, or meditation groups*

*near you, please call 530.478.7560 or visit [www.ananda.org](http://www.ananda.org) .*

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## THE EXPANDING LIGHT

Ananda's guest retreat, The Expanding Light, offers a varied, year-round schedule of classes and workshops on yoga, meditation, and spiritual practice. You may also come for a relaxed personal renewal, participating in ongoing activities as much or as little as you wish. The beautiful serene mountain setting, supportive staff, and delicious vegetarian food provide an ideal environment for a truly meaningful, spiritual vacation.

*For more information, please call 800.346.5350 or visit  
[www.expandinglight.org](http://www.expandinglight.org) .*